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THE
INVISIBLE GENTLEMAN,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“CHARTLEY THE FATALIST,” “THE ROBBER,”
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE INVISIBLE GENTLEMAN.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER the affairs of honour, with which the last volume terminated, Captain Popwell had, in the first instance, been taken from the scene of action to an adjoining public-house, from whence he was, in a few days, removed to his friend's mansion at Hackney. At his particular desire, the most favourable answer possible was given to all inquiries, though, in reality, scarcely any hopes were entertained of his recovery.

Our hero, who had for some weeks received the same accounts as other people, was one morning requested to walk into a parlour, where he was soon joined by Captain Brown, evidently under great excitement, though striving to appear cool.

“ I understand, Sir,” said he, “ that you have been making constant inquiries respecting my brave but unfortunate friend.”

“ It is impossible that any one can feel more anxious for his recovery than myself,” replied Bernard.

“ We will say nothing on that subject, if you please,” observed the captain, indignantly. “ The simple fact is, that my poor friend feels uneasy about your continuing in this country, as he knows, and indeed we all know, and you yourself must be aware, that in the event of his death you would be tried for murder: the idea of this affects him much, and at his particular request I now urge you to take precautions for your own safety. It is with grief I add, that his end is evidently and rapidly approaching; and when I think of the cause, and see you—but I will endeavour to be calm. Will you leave the country?”

“ Certainly not,” replied Bernard. “ I will still hope for his recovery: but, be the end what it may, conscious of my own innocence, I”——

“ Monstrous ! ” exclaimed the captain, interrupting him : — “ do you dare to speak thus to *me* ? ”

“ Dare ! ” cried our hero — “ I do not comprehend such language.”

“ Don’t you ? ” said the captain, contemptuously. “ Well, I have delivered poor Popwell’s message ; and now I tell you for myself, that if you do not leave the country immediately, you are a fool, as well as a scoundrel and a cowardly assassin ! ”

“ Consider the same words as applied to yourself,” cried Bernard. “ At any other time you dare not thus insult me. They shall not be forgotten though. It is the height of baseness, now that you see me suffering, to endeavour to force me to another duel.”

“ A duel ! ” exclaimed Captain Brown. “ Do you suppose I would admit *you* to the privileges of a gentleman ? Begone, fellow ! and if you ever presume to come here, under *any* pretence, I will give orders that you shall be horsewhipped off the premises.”

He then rang the bell, ordered a footman to

show "that person" out, and hastily quitted the room.

Such of our readers as have luckily wished their odd wishes in vain, and thereby chanced to escape being kicked, coachwhipped, caught in a trap, taken up as resurrectionists, &c. &c. may find it difficult to enter into our hero's feelings on the present occasion.

That he was somewhat indignant at being threatened with a horsewhip, is a matter of course ; but his anxiety respecting the fate of Captain Popwell was the master trouble for the time being. It was true that he had previously caused the death of a poor old woman ; but he had long since acquitted himself on that charge, inasmuch as the bell-pulling was commenced without any evil intention, and he had made every atonement in his power, by providing for her grandchildren. Moreover, he thought that, if that affair were impartially considered, the principal share of blame ought to be borne by those who propagated the foolish reports for which his frolic had served as foundation.

In the captain's case, however, his hand had done the deed ; and now he was informed of the too probable result, something very like remorse arose within him. But, alas ! genuine remorse is a feeling much more frequently talked about than experienced ; and he very soon began to upbraid himself for his own self-upbraidings. The old plea of intention was again successfully urged, and ere the sun set that day, he had, as he deemed impartially, tried himself in the court of his own conscience, and pronounced a verdict of self-acquittal.

In all probability, if Lieutenant Bonus had fallen instead of the captain, he would have hit upon some other expedient to produce the same result ; perhaps have pleaded necessity, or thrown the whole upon the shoulders of the elderly pale-faced stranger.

There was one thing however which he sincerely repented, and that was of having ever made use of his invisible gift. The most certain as well as the most promising sign of this repentance was evinced by his determination to

follow the advice of his uncle, and bind himself by a solemn oath never again to avail himself of his extraordinary power.

Several unsuccessful attempts, which he had invisibly made since the duels, to obtain an interview with Alicia, might have hastened this resolution. She was neither at Hackney, Clapham, nor in Russell Square ; and poor Andrews, whom he still kept at Audrey Hall, informed him that no person, except the old housekeeper and gardener, was at Maxdean.

Sir William's letters too, which always bore a different post-mark, were successively shorter and colder, and the last contained the following words : " I shall not again, after this, refer to the letter which I left for you when quitting town. You appear studiously to avoid touching upon a subject which is ever uppermost in my mind, and has rendered me truly miserable. You alone have the power of relieving me from the oppressive weight which bears me down, even more than my bodily infirmities. There was a time when, I think, you would willingly have made any sacrifice to promote

my happiness ; ask yourself what is the cause of the change, alas ! it is no *sacrifice* that I now ask of you. There is no other way, by which you can possibly avoid being plunged into endless difficulties and disgrace, than by abandoning the mysterious gift which the subtle Tempter has bestowed upon you. You may then retread your former steps ; the necessity for prevarication will cease, and the good principles instilled into your mind in earlier youth, and by which you ever appeared to have been actuated till so fatally led astray, may again exert their genial influence, and you may even yet be happy and respected. When you have taken this important step I shall be glad to see you ; the past will be forgiven, and, as much as possible forgotten, and every assistance in my power shall be rendered to forward your future plans and ensure your happiness. But while you hesitate, I must plainly tell you we cannot meet. Hereafter we must be as strangers ; what I suffered when in town, and what I still endure, tell me but too plainly, that to allow myself to be under the same roof with

you under present circumstances, would be a species of self-murder."

There was in the postscript of this letter a question, whether Andrews had given any offence that he was banished to Audrey Hall.

"It shall be done!" exclaimed Bernard, one morning, on receiving an account from his messenger that Captain Popwell was so far recovered as to be able to move into the country. "It shall be done! there is now no motive of sufficient importance to render hesitation longer necessary. I shall then see my poor uncle. Alas! he is now my *only* friend!"

This was too true: for as he had been unable to offer any satisfactory explanation of the falsehood which he had told, relative to the long interview with his lawyers at the time of his delinquency at Hackney, Lord Norcourt and the whole of his set of college acquaintance had unanimously cut him; and he had, in consequence, left Long's, and moved to a small quiet hotel near Leicester Square.

He first verbally, and then in writing, solemnly

bound himself never again, however pressing might be the occasion, to avail himself of his invisible gift. To make the important document more binding, he summoned two witnesses and signed it in their presence, after which he inclosed it, in a long and repentant letter, to his uncle.

On the third day an answer came from Sir William, inviting him to come immediately to Bath. The old gentleman briefly expressed his satisfaction at receiving the paper, but deferred all other observations till they should meet.

“O that I had abandoned that pernicious power in the first instance!” exclaimed Bernard. “Never, since the time I first possessed it, have I been so happy as for the last three days! And now I shall meet my uncle as before, and he will assist me in recovering Alicia.”

While he was thus congratulating himself, Counsellor Hawker was announced: — but of him it will be necessary to say a few words. His father, Sir Close Hawker, of whom Mr.

Storer once made mention, had amassed a large fortune in trade by dint of miserly parsimony ; and being of opinion that

— dainty bits

Make fat the ribs, but banker out the wits,

he carefully withheld all such dangerous indulgences from his son. The consequences appeared to prove the correctness of his plan ; for the youth grew up a very keen Hawker indeed, or, as their friends said, he was “ a chip of the old block,” and, no doubt, “ slept with one eye open.” He had but lately been called to the bar ; and on that occasion his affectionate parent addressed him nearly in the following words :—

“ Now, my dear boy, I have done all I can for you. You have cost me a great deal of money, to be sure ; but now you ’ve got a profession of your own, I dare say you will soon be able to make me amends. Not that I mean exactly to make any demand upon you ; but, in future, you must look out for yourself, as I was obliged to do in your grandfather’s time. However, I shall always be glad to assist you—with my advice, which, as I have lived a few years

longer in the world than you have, you may perhaps find sometimes worth having."

The son and heir of such an old fellow was not likely to be overlooked entirely by his lawyers, whenever "anything in his line" occurred in the course of their business ; and Bernard, in pursuance of his resolution of atoning, as far as possible, for the evils occasioned by his invisible deeds, had called upon them to retain counsel in behalf of his unlucky groom. Counsellor Hawker had consequently been duly feed, and had paid one visit to poor John Stubbs, in whose mind he endeavoured strongly to impress the propriety and policy of confessing the truth to *him*, that he might be enabled to plan his defence accordingly. But John Stubbs stoutly asserted his innocence, and affirmed that his late master had sworn to a downright lie, and had never given him a stitch of clothes, and so forth ; and so the counsel, being somewhat bothered by his pertinacity, resolved to have an interview with the said master, and see what he could make of him.

After detailing to our hero what had passed

between the prisoner and himself, he stated that the proving of the clothes having been given to Stubbs was the only point in evidence that he feared.

“That fact,” he continued, “will weigh heavily against us in itself; but the fellow’s positive denial will, I fear, create a prejudice in the minds of the jury, which may make it fatal to our cause. As I understand that *you* are *in reality* my client, and take, of course, a warm interest in the event, I have thought it my duty to inform you of this circumstance, and, if you please, to consult with you relative to our future proceedings.”

“I certainly should wish the man to escape,” replied Bernard. “Indeed I am really surprised that the parties should carry on the prosecution; for, positively, no injury was committed. It was merely, after all, not a robbery, but a simple exchange of a suit of clothes; and I must say, from what I saw of them, those left behind were the best of the two. Probably it was nothing more than a drunken frolic. Indeed, the dirty state of the cast-off suit almost

proves that the wearer had got into a row, or tumbled into the kennel, and was probably ashamed to return home in such a pickle."

The counsellor inquired the man's general character, and Bernard replied, "He was with me only a few weeks, and I had no reason to be dissatisfied with him. We parted in consequence of a few words respecting his ignorance of the road to Hackney, and I must confess, on reflection, that I was extremely hasty on that occasion, and I had a particular engagement there, which I did not arrive in time to fulfil in consequence of being misdirected."

After some farther conversation, the counsellor ventured to hint, that if it should not be proved on the trial that the clothes in question ever belonged to the prisoner, he might get off, and then carelessly observed, "You have received a subpoena, of course?"

Bernard caught at the idea. His removal from Long's in a hackney-coach had been arranged in such a manner as to prevent his quondam friends from knowing the place of his retreat; and being without a servant, he had,

on the following day called and driven his cabriolet from the livery stables, stating that he was going out of town for a few days. Thus the messengers for the prosecution had lost him for a time.

“ I happen to be going to leave London to-day,” said he to the counsellor, who, with a significant smile, replied, “ Indeed ! It is lucky that I happened to call just in time. The period of your stay is, I suppose, very uncertain.”

“ Very,” said Bernard.

The arrangement was perfectly understood, and soon after the two gentlemen shook hands most cordially and parted. On his way to Bath, our hero congratulated himself exceedingly on the very easy manner in which he had glided out of this disagreeable affair.

“ The fellow,” said he, “ will be acquitted for want of evidence, and the imprisonment he will have undergone is scarcely an adequate punishment for his rascality, since I am *perfectly* convinced that he lamed the horse.”

Sir William received his repentant nephew

with kind condoling cordiality. But it was soon painfully evident to both that the bond of mutual confidence, when once broken, cannot be restored by the mere resumption of former habits—sitting at the same table, sleeping beneath the same roof, and exchanging the morning and evening salutations. There were frequent long and awkward pauses when they were together. The easy gentle playfulness of the old school, and the careless gaiety of the new, were alike departed. Formerly they had never been used to think of what they were going to say to each other. Now, almost every subject appeared objectionable. One fancied that an allusion to a particular topic might be construed into indirect reproach, while the other feared it might awaken painful remembrance. Still both resolved to endure : Bernard, because he considered that he was undergoing the just punishment for his offences ; and Sir William, because he *would* hope that, a certain period of probation past, all might yet be well. He had watched over the education of his nephew, and marked, noted, and digested, the opening

of his mind and his every propensity ; and the task had been a pleasant one, till that evil hour when he first discovered him to be guilty of a falsehood.

The subsequent shock, as we have seen, had been heavy. But the worthy knight could not endure the idea of utterly abandoning the tree, which he had tended from the time it was a sapling, and marked its growth from year to year, and which he trusted would strike its roots firmly into his paternal soil, and send forth its branches to flourish there for many generations.

“ I was in hopes, sir,” said the attendant physician one day to Bernard, “ that Sir William would have recovered his spirits on *your* arrival. He has been far too much alone, and I have in vain urged him to go a little into society. You must endeavour to persuade him. He *must* find something to amuse his mind, which seems ever brooding upon some gloomy fancy. The alteration in his whole character and deportment is wonderful since he was here last. *Then* he was always to be seen in the morning at the rooms, walking and conversing

cheerfully with his old acquaintance, many of whom are now here. But *this* time he seldom goes out, and when he does, he appears to shun everybody ; and, among other strange whims, he has debarred himself from reading the newspapers, which used to furnish him his principal morning's amusement. He told me that he dared not look at them, as he expected always to find something which would make him unhappy. If you can persuade him to abandon such odd notions and fears, you will do him more good than all my advice, though his bodily health certainly requires the closest medical attention."

Bernard did exert himself to cheer his uncle, and succeeded in persuading him to walk and ride out occasionally ; but for reasons of his own, did not press the reading of the newspapers.

Things were in this state, when one morning Sir William addressed his nephew, by observing that they had hitherto, as if by mutual consent, said but little of the Storer family.

"I now introduce the subject," he continued,

“ to show you that I have not been unmindful of your concerns. When I received your welcome letter, I immediately made known its contents to our worthy friend, who expressed his satisfaction by return of post ; but referred all observations relative to a renewal of our connexion to a future time. Perhaps, under existing circumstances, no more could well be expected ; but, as I naturally feel very anxious to see you settled, I have ventured to write again, assuring him that your conduct, since you have been here, has been in every respect such as he must approve and even admire. Indeed, Bernard, I feel that, at your age, it is a great sacrifice you make, to live in the melancholy monotonous way in which we go on.”

“ Do not say so, my dearest uncle,” exclaimed Bernard. “ You are my *only* friend ! While I heeded your counsel I was happy, and even might have remained so, had I consulted you in the hour of my temptation, instead of following my own ridiculous fancies, and plunging headlong forward till——”

“ Say no more on that subject,” resumed Sir

William, shuddering: "Let it be buried in oblivion. I have Mr. Storer's answer this morning, and it is but right that you should see it. It is not quite what I wish, but affords us, I think, some ground for hope."

Our hero took the letter, and read as follows.

"DEAR SIR WILLIAM,

"Yours of the 9th instant, came duly to hand, and note its contents. We are very glad to learn that you are satisfied with the young gentleman, and trust his conduct in future will be such as to meet your approbation. The samples he gave us when in town were very unsatisfactory, but it is a long lane that has no turning, and many a ship has come safe into port after being given up at Lloyd's; so let us hope that in the end all will be well. Sorry to let a post go by, but did not like to reply to your favour till I had talked to my old woman, who, as usual, is of my way of thinking, which is a great comfort, as things are very cross in Mincing Lane. Our homeward-bound East India ship, the Mermaid, last accounts off the

Cape more than three months ago. If she'd got ears should think she'd been pulling at sea — no joke though. Wife and I both think we must stop a bit, and see how the young squire goes on. Won't do to increase the account with a man who has suffered his bills to be returned, noted, and protested, though he may have contrived to take them up afterwards by the assistance of a friend—must look sharp for a bit at all events, though he may come round if give him time to turn himself. But the junior partner in our concern in Russell Square is now absent, and the business belongs entirely to her department. I'm sure she will be glad to hear that the partnership is dissolved between Bernard Audrey and Co. for the sake of 'auld lang syne;' so let us hope that all will end well. Mrs. S. joins in respects, and wishing that the Bath waters may clear your account with the board of health, I remain, my dear sir,

“Your sincere friend, J. STORER.

“P.S. Announced by telegraph, Mermaid safe off Spithead.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AS Sir William frequently talked of going to see how things went on at Audrey Hall, Bernard thought Andrews might as well remain there, according to his previous orders. Great, therefore, was his surprise and alarm on receiving the following letter, inclosed in a parcel from Sir William's lawyers, who apologised for sending it to him, by stating that they were unacquainted with Mr. Audrey's address, and the writer appeared to be extremely anxious for its speedy delivery.

“ HON'D SIR,

“ I was sent for all in a hurry by means of a law paper they call a supeeny, and so asked Mr. Kenemall what I must do, and he sade I must

come away direckly, or I should be sent to prison, which I knew wouldn't be agreeable to you, so I came to London, and saw Mr. Hawker, the counsellor, as you have hired to help John Stubbs, and he told me the story about his stealing the clothes at Hackney, but I don't recollect your given him any, and he says no, and so how could it be him. I can't make out the bizzness at all, but the law will have its way, and it's no use saying anything, for they won't let me see the clothes till the trial comes on, wich is expeckted in a day or two, wen I can speak to that pint at all events, if they ask me, because I know all your clothes, but Mr. Hawker says praps I ma'n't be wanted after all, but there determined to make sure on me if they do, for I got another supeeney wen I went to Long's to inquire after your honour, and found you was gon nobody knows where, but I thought you 'd wonder where I was, and so wrote this, and shall go back to Audrey direckly the trial's over if so be you've no other designation for me, wen I shall call at Mr. Harlestone's office

for an answer the last thing before I goes. Remaining your humble servant to command,

“ J. ANDREWS.”

This perplexing epistle was written in London five days before its arrival in Bath, and in the mean while events had occurred which we must now proceed to relate.

The trial of poor John Stubbs came on in due course, and for lack of any evidence that either of the suits of clothes had ever been in his possession, his acquittal soon appeared to be a matter of certainty.

Some surprise was expressed that, under such circumstances, the prosecutor should have thought of persevering, but, unfortunately for our hero, the friends of Captain Popwell were determined to give the affair as much publicity as possible. Their counsel alluded to the deposition made by the master of the prisoner, *on oath*, at Bow Street, and lamented that misguided feelings of compassion should induce a gentleman of his property and respect-

ability to evade giving evidence on the present occasion.

Captain Popwell and his valet stated what they knew of the affair, which merely went to prove that somebody had made the unwelcome change of apparel, but in no degree legally criminated the prisoner, against whom there was, notwithstanding, a strong feeling, in consequence of the former evidence and present absence of his master.

The court had already observed, that really there appeared to be no case for the jury, when the counsel for the prosecution, as if struck by a sudden recollection, requested his lordship's permission to call one more witness, and, in the course of a minute, Andrews was placed in the box.

Everybody was struck with the prisoner's manner at the appearance of this new evidence. Instead of being alarmed, his eyes glistened with delight at the sight of his fellow-servant, and he could not help exclaiming—

“ *He* 'll soon clear me ! *He* 's none of your lying sort ! *He* 's as honest a fellow as ever

was born!" And overwhelmed with agitation, he sank forward and shed tears of joy.

It had not been Counsellor Hawker's intention to call upon Andrews for his evidence, in consequence of certain suspicions which arose in his mind, after a conversation with him, respecting the state of his master's wardrobe at the period in question.

Perhaps, if Bernard had been in town, he might have communicated with him on the subject, but as matters were, he consulted his father, who, after inquiring if his client was a rich man, said—

"One thing at a time, lad! You are retained now for a particular purpose. Get through that, which seems easy enough, and keep what you suspect in hand. It may bring him under your thumb another day. If he is fool or rogue enough to bring himself into trouble, that's his own fault, and all you've got to do then, is to help him through, and to mind that you get well paid."

The attorneys for the prosecution had left subpœnas at Long's for our hero and his valet,

and the circumstances revealed in the examination of the latter, induced them to contrive that he should be kept within call, but at a sufficient distance from the court to prevent him from hearing the progress of the trial. Consequently, when placed in the witness's box, he was utterly ignorant of all that had passed.

On being shown the various articles of apparel, he examined them, and declared he remembered them all perfectly well.

“And do you not know,” asked the counsel, “that your master gave that suit which is so much soiled to the prisoner?”

“No,” replied Andrews, “I can't say that I do; but he might for all that, though I should think it very unlikely; for why should he give away shirt and cravat, and stockings and all, and a pair of boots that wasn't more than three days old?”

“Why, as for that,” said the counsellor, laughing, “I really can't say. It does seem very odd, to be sure. But however, since you cannot answer *my* question distinctly, be so good as to tell us all you *do* know about the

clothes before you, just in your *own* way, as well as you can remember. Don't hurry yourself, and recollect you are upon your oath."

"Very well, Sir," said Andrews; "I've no objection, I'm sure. Master went out with Lord Norcourt in that dirty suit of clothes,"—here there was great merriment in court, at which the witness gravely looked round and continued,—“but they was quite clean then, and how they could come in such a pickle I'm sure I can't say—but I can't be accountable for that. All I know is, that I never saw 'em again from that hour to this, for when he came back he was all in a hurry, and so I had no time to ask him any questions, and he went out very early next morning, and when he came back, ever so many of his Oxford acquaintance called upon him, and he went to dine with them; and next day they came to breakfast with him; and so there was such a bustle that I quite forgot to ask him where the others was to be sent to."

"What others?" asked the counsel.

“ Why, the clean suit as he came home in — them before you,” replied Andrews.

“ Do you mean to say that your master ever wore these clothes ?” inquired the counsel.

“ Yes, to be sure he did,” said the witness. “ I tell you he went out in them that is so dirty now, and came back in the others. I can’t be mistaken, because he only changed his coat, and pulled off them boots, and slipped on a pair of silk stockings over his others, before dinner, as Lord Norcourt was waiting. And I wondered how he came by the things ; but when he went to bed I found all he had on belonged to the same person, and so suppose he met with some accident, and was obliged to change at a friend’s house.”

“ Do you know where your master is now ?” was the next question.

“ No,” said Andrews, “ I’ve never seen him since the morning of the breakfast, when he sent me off all of a sudden into the country, after some papers, and told me to stay there till I heard from him.”

“ But gentlemen’s clothes are often so much

like each other that, perhaps, you may be mistaken in saying that *this* is the *very* suit your master came home in," observed the counsellor. "You cannot be too cautious, now you are upon your oath."

"I am quite sure," said the witness, "because I took such particular notice when I put them by to be returned, as they didn't belong to us. I minded that the buttons on the coat sleeves was put on in a different way from master's, and the back of the waistcoat was marked with indelible ink, pretty near washed out, so as I could only read Captain Pop— of some regiment, and all the rest of the things was marked H. B. P. and the stockings was darned where they 'd been torn in the leg, and the left boot had the inside loop torn off."

These indications were found to be perfectly correct, and John Stubbs forthwith requested that he might be allowed to ask the witness if he recollected how *he* was engaged, at the time the robbery was said to have been committed.

"To be sure I do," replied Andrews. "We had neither of us got anything to do, and so

you said you'd teach me to play at cribbage, a penny a rub, and we was together at it from when it began to be dark till master came home, pretty near seven o'clock, and then I went up stairs, and you was surprised to see me come back so soon, as master wasn't five minutes dressing, as I said just now. And then we agreed to have another game, after you'd been to do up the horse, while he and my lord was at their wine. I remember it all as well as if it was but yesterday. And you was turned away next day, because you didn't know the way to Hackney, and you told me that you was sure master would repent of turning you off, because he'd overdriven the horse, and you thought had lamed him."

The prisoner was immediately acquitted; and as one of his former masters was in court to speak to his character, Captain Brown took him into his service, and with him and Captain Popwell the poor fellow left town that afternoon, and travelled two stages.

We now return to our hero at Bath. He first with feverish anxiety glanced over the

newspapers. There was no report of Stubbs's trial. So catching at a glimpse of hope, he wrote to Andrews *instantly* to return to Audrey Hall, and pay no attention to the lawyers or their subpœnas, as he would be answerable for the consequences.

The next day was one of equal suspense ; but on the third morning Sir William received the following letter.

“ HONOURED SIR,

“ I am very sorry to write to you so, but indeed I can't stop no longer with young master. John Stubbs the groom has been pretty nere hanged, and all for nothing, as he must ha' knowed he was innocent, and it was all his own doing about some clothes wot he wore of another gentleman's wen his own was all over dirt, wich is very misterus how they cum so, but I don't want to inquire nor make mischief, only if you won't take me agin as before, wich I hope, into your service, I must look out for another place. 'This cums hoping your honour has got the better of the mollunkolics wich cum on in the

Imperial. Master Bernard sent me to the old hall, were I staid till I was sent for about the groom with a supeeny, so I don't know how he's a going on, nor were, only I got a letter from him to-day, direckly after the trial, wen I called at Mr. Harlestone's, post marked Bath, wich is all I know, and I am to go back to Audrey were I shall wate your honour's commands till death if you please, for I don't desire a better service nor yours, nor wat it used to be with young master, but that's all changed, so it's no use talking nor making other folks wich I am uncumfortable, but I must go if so be as you won't keep me, wich I hope, and so no more at present, but my duty from

“Your honour's humble servant to command,

“J. ANDREWS.”

While poor Sir William was perusing this letter, and too clearly discerning in it the consequences of some invisible adventure, our hero was reading the report of Stubbs's trial. It was brief, and merely stated that the pri-

soner's innocence and a complete *alibi* were proved by one of the witnesses brought forward on behalf of the prosecution. No sort of comment was made upon what had transpired in court, and Bernard endeavoured to persuade himself that the affair was at an end.

When his uncle showed him Andrews's letter, he begged of him for the present to take him again into his service.

"You know too well, sir," said he, "the cause of the poor fellow's discontent; and as nothing of the kind *can* again occur, I have no doubt he will soon become reconciled, and we shall go on as well as ever. The circumstance which led to the groom's trial was one of a ridiculous nature, perfectly harmless in itself, but like all my other actions, during the time I retained my disastrous gift, was productive of trouble to some one else as well as to myself. Before leaving town, I made arrangements for the poor fellow's defence, and I am happy to say that he has been acquitted."

Sir William having determined to let "by

gones" alone, inquired not for farther particulars, and wrote a very satisfactory reply to honest Andrews.

Another week had rolled by in peace and quietness, when Sir William was walking the rooms one morning, leaning on the arm of his nephew. They had taken several turns, ere the latter observed a group of gentlemen, whose attention was evidently fixed on him, and the cause appeared but too plain when he recognized among them the person of Captain Popwell, pale and emaciated, with every mark of a sinking invalid.

It was with great difficulty that Bernard could support his part; but the group soon dispersed, and though there were whisperings in different parts of the room, and he fancied even that he heard his own name mentioned, no one directly accosted him.

"I cannot remain here," thought he, on his return home. "It is plain, that if I attempt it, some unpleasant consequences will ensue," and after weighing various plans, he came to the resolution of persuading Sir William to go to

Audrey Hall, for the purpose of superintending the transplanting then going forward.

When he proposed this journey, his uncle, so far from objecting, expressed great satisfaction that the old hall and estate were not forgotten.

“ I was almost afraid they had been,” he said, “ we have so seldom talked of the place lately. I cannot expect to see it what it will be—but I should like to plant a few trees in the old park, where they may stand and flourish, and keep the poor old East Indian in remembrance among your children. And if I do not avail myself of *this* year, it is but too probable that I shall have missed the *last* opportunity.”

Bernard, of course, combated this idea, but the old gentleman shook his head in reply, and observed that he should be ready to commence the journey as soon as his physician would permit.

Here another perplexity arose. The physician was peremptory in insisting that his patient should remain in Bath at least ten days longer, as the remedies, which he had latterly exhibit-

ed, were of such a nature as to render travelling dangerous at that inclement season. This opinion decided the question—and then, a fresh embarrassment arose for our unlucky hero. The doctor strongly recommended, and even urged upon Sir William, the necessity of being more out of doors during the brief interval before he would undertake his journey.

“We must avoid extremes, my dear sir,” said he. “You must make use of your legs, and of your carriage and horses, while you are here, or I really do not know when I can let you go. The idea of your leaving this little torrid zone of your own to stand about in the cold damp air, overlooking your men at work in your plantations, is not to be thought of. You have confined yourself far too much lately, and now you must accustom yourself to exposure by degrees.”

This result, so precisely opposite to Bernard’s wishes, reduced him again to the necessity of contriving some pretext for leaving a place where it appeared scarcely probable that he

could remain many hours without insult or exposure. His first shift was to complain of a violent sprain in the ankle, by which he escaped from walking in public for a day or two: but still he could not feel at ease till he quitted Bath. Every knock at the door agitated him, and when he rode with Sir William in his chariot, he always threw himself back, to escape notice. At length he hit upon a plan which appeared perfectly satisfactory to all parties. It was agreed that he should go immediately to London, to visit the nursery grounds in the vicinity, and select certain rare shrubs and trees not to be procured in Northamptonshire, where they were to be forwarded by the canal, so as to arrive about the same time as Sir William.

“ I will give you a letter to an old friend of mine,” said the knight; “ he was fortunate in realizing, and returning from India many years ago, and has been very successful in his plantations. I am sure he will feel great pleasure in affording you every information in his power;

and experience in these matters, as in every thing else, is worth a world of theory."

Bernard expressed great pleasure at the idea of such an introduction, much more certainly than he felt when the letter was written and put into his hands, and he read the address—

To Sir Marmaduke Bonus, Bart. &c. &c. &c.

"You will not find it a common letter of form, Bernard," said the knight. "Bonus and I started together in life; but he had more powerful friends, and was fortunate in his appointment, and so left the country many years before I could. He has a nephew about your own age, a naval man, with whom I think you will be pleased. Do you know him?"

"I remember seeing him once," replied our hero.

"He is a fine young fellow," observed Sir William; "I was much struck with him myself. I hope he made a favourable impression upon you?"

"Humph!" thought Bernard, "not very;" but he said that, not being regularly introduced, they had exchanged only a very few words.

All being ready for his departure, our hero resolved to trust as little as possible to servants, for he had certain indistinct apprehensions that his motions were watched. He, therefore, waited till it was dark ere he went to engage a place in the mail for the next day.

“All full inside, Sir, — one place outside though,” was the reply of the book-keeper to his inquiry.

Other coaches were indicated, by which he was assured that he would arrive in town nearly as early as the mail, so he made choice of one, paid his money, and was regularly booked in his own name, being deterred from his inclination to assume any other, by reflecting that he had resolved to abandon all sorts of deceit, together with his baneful invisibility.

During this transaction, a coarse-looking man had been standing by his side, overhearing, of course, all that passed.

“What is it you want?” asked the book-keeper.

“I want to go to Lunnun too,” said the stranger; “so, as I dare say the gemman knows

which is the best coach, I'll go by the same, if you've any room outside."

Bernard buttoned up his coat and was leaving the office, when his new travelling acquaintance said,

"Good night, Sir! Hope we shall have a pleasant journey together to-morrow."

"Free and easy!" thought Bernard, "a farmer, I suppose;" and as he walked home he congratulated himself upon having engaged a place in a coach which would not probably attract quite so much attention on its departure as the mail.

In the morning however, to avoid all chance of an unpleasant encounter, he sent his luggage to the office, and resolved to wait the arrival of the coach at Walcot turnpike gate.

As the heavily laden vehicle drove up, he perceived the person who had saluted him on the preceding evening, on the box with the coachman. His companions in the inside were a lady, a military gentleman, and a vulgar-looking man, who, as he fancied, eyed him with a very impertinent degree of curiosity. Con-

ceiving the fellow to be beneath his notice, he soon entered into conversation with his other fellow travellers, and, pleased at the idea of having quitted Bath without any disagreeable occurrence, experienced a buoyancy of spirits to which he had for some time been a stranger.

All went on well till the lady unluckily inquired of the officer if he knew a gentleman of the name of Popwell, who was at Bath for the benefit of his health.

“ Perfectly well, Madam,” was the reply. “ Poor fellow ! He has been sadly knocked about. I’m afraid what he got at Badajoz will carry him off at last.”

“ I understood,” said the lady, “ that his illness was from a wound received in a duel.”

“ No, I assure you, Ma’m,” continued the officer, “ it is the old affair that sticks to him. He certainly *did* go out, some time back, with a fellow whom he ought never to have been seen with, and it’s a sore subject — he doesn’t like to hear it talked of. The scoundrel had the audacity to show himself in the rooms last week, and would have been kicked out, only

he was with a poor old invalid. I suppose he guessed though how things were, for he has not been seen since."

Our hero, after this conversation, became almost as taciturn as the vulgar-looking man by his side.

CHAPTER XXIX.

EARLY in the morning the Bath coach arrived in Piccadilly, and Bernard resolved to take up his quarters at Hatchett's.

"Then I'll stop here too," said his vulgar-looking fellow-traveller.

"And so will I then," growled the coachman's companion, coming down from his seat, and then, with a familiar nod, he bade our hero, "Good morning, sir."

Though not particularly gratified by the easy manners of his new acquaintance, he deemed it not worth while to take notice of it, and was busily engaged in looking after his luggage, when his eyes suddenly encountered a figure at the back of the coach, which completely fixed his attention. This was no other than his late

groom, John Stubbs, well wrapped up in a large box-coat, in which he had passed the night.

Now Bernard had frequently thought of the poor fellow, and wished to find him, having determined in some way to make him a compensation for what he had innocently undergone; therefore, after the first start of surprise, he went up to him, and said, "I wanted to see you, Stubbs. I am now perfectly convinced that you were unjustly accused."

"Are you?" quoth Stubbs, in a very thankless manner. "It 'ud be very odd if you warn't."

"Don't forget yourself," said our hero, somewhat loftily. "My wish is to serve you, and if you will stop here and come to me presently, I have something to say to you which you will not be sorry to hear."

The bustle of paying the coachman and guard, and watching the luggage, prevented any farther parley, but it was evident that Stubbs meant not to go any farther, and so all appeared satisfactory; and in a few minutes Bernard was alone in a snug room beginning his breakfast, after which he resolved to enjoy a

few hours' sleep, previous to commencing his nursery pursuits.

"I may as well have the poor fellow in at once," thought he, pulling the bell. "The affair will be off *my* mind then, as well as *his*; and considering what he has undergone, I will act handsomely towards him."

When the groom entered, he was not quite so fierce as when first accosted by his late master at the back of the coach, but stood, hat in hand, after rubbing down his hair, as if waiting for orders.

"You have been very ill used, Stubbs," said Bernard.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"I almost felt convinced that you were innocent from the first," continued Bernard, "and I instructed Counsellor Hawker to defend you."

"He warn't o' no use," said the groom.

"Well—but he might have been, if things had gone hard against you," observed our hero, scarcely knowing how to proceed. "However—that is of little consequence now, as you have got off—and with a good character too, I hope;

if not, you may refer to me at any time, and I will give you one."

A stiff inclination of the head, and a muttering of some unintelligible sounds, acknowledged this permission, and our hero continued,

"I have been thinking of you a good deal, Stubbs. It is no trifling thing for a person in your station to be kept in prison, and be brought up for trial; and I must confess that nothing of the kind would have happened if I had not foolishly mentioned some suspicions which I entertained at the time, but which I am now convinced were groundless. Therefore, as I consider myself, in a great measure, to have been the cause of your troubles, I think that, in strict justice between man and man, I am bound to make you what compensation is in my power. Under these circumstances," he continued, taking out his pocket-book, "as matters are, I shall make you a present of fifty pounds. There are ten fives—count them. I wish they may be of real service to you."

John Stubbs stared—scratched his head—advanced slowly to the table—received the

notes — held them fast for a moment, as if to make sure that he had really got them — then thrust them into his pocket — picked up his hat from the floor — cast a sort of triumphantly contemptuous glance upon his late master, and, with a chuckling laugh, swang himself out of the room, and banged the door after him, without saying so much as “Thank your honour.”

“The fellow bears malice,” thought Bernard, “and I cannot be surprised at it. I will persevere, however, in making retribution to the extent of my power, and leave the event to time.”

Consoling himself with these praiseworthy resolutions, he despatched his breakfast, and had scarcely finished, when he was visited by his vulgar, nocturnal fellow-traveller, accompanied by the recent occupier of somewhat more than half the coach-box.

“I believe you have mistaken the room, gentlemen,” observed Bernard, distantly.

“Why, no, sir,” replied the inside passenger; “I believe we’re pretty right. We just want to say a few words to you — that’s all.”

“ We ’d a pleasant journey of it,” remarked the outside, with a knowing wink ; and rubbing his hands, he advanced to the fire, and continued, “ Cold weather though, for outside all night. I had the worst of it this time, but remember it will be your turn next trip, Bob : I sha’n’t stand it twice running, mind.”

“ Better than being stewed three in a chaise,” replied Bob. “ Save expense too, and that ’s summut, for there ’s always a grumbling, let one shave as close as one will. Blow me if I ’d anything between dinner and supper yesterday but two glasses of brandy and water, and nothing for lunch but bread and cheese and a pint of ale, at Kennet.”

“ I ’d the whip hand o’ you there,” said his companion, stirring Bernard’s fire. “ We got a gallon stone-jar filled. Capital stuff that Kennet ale for nightwork ; gone afore morning though. Couldn’t offer you any, you know,” (here he winked again at our hero,) “ cause you was a gemman, travelling inside. I shouldn’t care if we had a jug of it here now.”

“Nor I neither,” observed Bob, “with a dish o’ beef-stakes and ingions.”

“As you seem to give such a decided preference to this parlour,” said Bernard, rising, “I shall leave you to enjoy it, as I mean to go to bed.”

“Phoo! phoo! there can’t be no occasion for that,” observed Bob, getting between him and the bell-pull. “You’ve had snoozing enough all night, and if so be as you wants any more, why you’ll have plenty of time when we gets to our journey’s end.”

“What can you possibly mean, fellow?” exclaimed our hero.

“Come, come, there’s no use going into the heroics, as the playfolks say,” calmly observed Bob. “You knows what we wants with you. You’ve carried things off blessed well, I must own, and played the fine gemman all the way, pretty near as well as I could ha’ done it myself. But it’s no use shamming Abraham now, and that money as you give to Captain Brown’s groom, he says was no more than you owed him: and besides he doesn’t belong to us, and

only come for the sake of your dentification, as there should be no mistakes. So you 're *compos mentis* to the matter now, aren't you."

The mention of Captain Brown's name threw a very disagreeable light upon the affair, and Bernard requested to be informed of the nature of the charge against him.

"Ay, ay," said Bob, "that is but fair, or else how should you know, considering the different lines as you've worked in? It's the Hackney job this time,—an't it Hackney, Jem, where Captain Brown's father lives?"

"Yes, to be sure," replied Jem, and then, turning to our hero, he continued, "No call to be down in the mouth about it. I don't look upon 't as it'll be much of a pull-up for such an old hand as you. I say, Bob, this is the covey as I told you such a rum go about, what was had up with a dead body at Bow Street. It turned out aterwards as he'd never resurreccionised the stiff un himself, but stole it from ugly Tom and squinting Dick, who was cotched a bit ago for some other consarn, and confessed that somehow or other he contrived to blind

'em, and gave 'em a drubbing when they couldn't see him, and so made off with the booty, and got nabbed."

"Humph!" said Bob; and then turning to his prisoner, he continued, "Never mind, my hearty! You're got good friends, at any rate. I remember that was a very easy come off, and set our folks a staring; and there was a bit of a stir about it in the papers, but it come to nothing. So, I dare say you can prove an *alibi* in this here consarn; but I've no need to advise one as is more than a match for a brace of body snatchers. I say, Jem, under them sarcumstances we'd need have the ruffles, hadn't us?"

"I shall go with you quietly," observed Bernard, with a desponding air; "and I promise you that you shall not repent of any kindness which you may be disposed to show me, in my present unfortunate situation."

As it was broad daylight, and John Stubbs was to accompany them, the officers agreed that the ignominious ceremony of the hand-cuffs might be dispensed with on the present occa-

sion, and our hero was immediately escorted to prison.

The forms of law are tedious, even in narrative. Therefore we follow not the repentant invisible gentleman through his examination, committal, and other numerous contingent mortifications. Suffice it to state, that, by the exertions of Counsellor Hawker, he was in a few days released on giving exorbitant bail, to procure which he was obliged to indemnify the parties by securities upon his own property.

The first use he made of his liberty, was to fulfil his uncle's commission, of course without troubling Sir Marmaduke Bonus, at whose house, however, he subsequently called, on reading in the papers that he had left town for Brighton.

The time prescribed by the physicians for Sir William's stay at Bath soon expired, and a day was fixed for his arrival at Audrey Hall, where he desired his nephew to meet him, and hoped that they should both find pleasure and mental repose in improving the family estate. Bernard sighed to think that his trial must

make one unpleasant break in this tranquillity ; but Counsellor Hawker assured him that he had nothing to fear.

“ Leave the whole to me, sir,” said he ; “ and all will be right. The secret service money is employed in a way that cannot fail. I have consulted with my father, who, I find, knows mankind much better than I once thought he did, and he has promised his assistance, which, as his interest is concerned, we may make pretty sure of.”

“ How can his interest possibly be connected with mine ?” asked our hero.

“ Oh, never mind,” replied his counsellor ; “ there are wheels within wheels, and when we wish to carry a point, we must set all in motion. We have *him* snug enough.”

Bernard strove, as much as possible, to rely upon these assurances ; but, notwithstanding, the idea of a disgraceful public trial sometimes nearly overpowered him. The mere circumstance of exchanging apparel, might, considering his rank in life, have passed off as a frolic, had it not been for his perjury and the accusa-

tion of his groom. But his counsel would not reveal his plan of defence, and perplexed him exceedingly, by sending him one day with a letter to an obscure office in a lane near the Temple, where he was detained several hours by a stranger, who asked him divers insignificant questions, then requested him to take a seat, as he had most urgent business in hand *for the moment*, after which he professed to have something very important to disclose. The whole ended in the stranger's strong recommendations for Bernard to purchase a small estate, consisting of three tenements, in an obscure street in the Borough of Southwark ; and, when Counsellor Hawker was informed of the circumstance, he said they *must* be bought, and Bernard bought them accordingly.

Still, in the midst of his troubles, his mind was ever wandering to Alicia. Frequently, of an evening, he strolled to Russell Square, and was sometimes sorely tempted to make an invisible visit to the family. But, though he happily withstood all such suggestions, he felt

that it was impossible to leave town, without seeking an interview with Mr. Storer.

Supposing that the servants in the Square would have received orders not to admit him, he resolved to call at the counting-house in the city. The merchant was, as usual, in his own private office, and when Bernard's card was delivered to him, he gave orders that the gentleman should be requested to walk in. Poor Bernard entered with fear and trembling, and his downcast repentant air was not lost upon the worthy merchant, though he looked up but for a moment, nodded his head, pointed with his pen to a chair, and said. "Morning—take a seat—finish my letter—speak to you directly ;" and, then, as if he felt no surprise at receiving such a visiter, went on with his writing.

The few minutes during which he was thus employed were anxiously spent by our hero ; but they were, nevertheless, useful to him, inasmuch as they afforded him an opportunity of collecting his scattered thoughts. When Mr. Storer had finished his letter, he

proceeded systematically to fold, direct, and seal it; and, while engaged in the latter operation, inquired after Sir William. Bernard gave a favourable account, and mentioned their intended meeting at Audrey Hall.

“There, that’s done!” said the merchant, placing the letter he had written among others for the post. “One thing at a time—glad to hear uncle’s better—native air and little employment do him good—come round, perhaps—moping up in that room in Covent Garden, soon closed his account. Talk much about the Brahmin now?—hope not.”

“My uncle has never mentioned the circumstance lately,” replied Bernard; “and I hope that the importance he once attached to it, is gradually fading from his mind. Perhaps, though, his silence may have been caused by a wish to spare my feelings; for since I have followed his advice, and he is convinced that I will steadily persevere in the line of conduct which he has marked out for me, nothing can exceed his kindness.”

“Good man—good man,” said Mr. Storer.

“Wrote me word that you’d dissolved partnership with you know who — glad to hear it — bad connexion — bad spec. Old un signed deed of dissolution as well as yourself? — hope won’t come upon you with any fresh demands? — accounts all straight, eh?”

“Whoever the mysterious individual to whom you allude might be,” replied our hero, “I assure you, sir, that there was no agreement of any sort between us. I have already related to you all the particulars of the only meeting we ever had, and have now merely to say, that I have solemnly sworn never again to make use of the singular power with which he invested me. This was my uncle’s advice, and I adopted it from the conviction that I had no other chance of saving myself from utter destruction and misery.”

“Couldn’t have done better,” observed Mr. Storer. “Often thought of your case. Terrible change — used to be glad to see you — all frightened lately — daren’t mention your name. Don’t bear malice though — sorry for what happened last time was at my house — no busi-

ness to come there though—Englishman's house his castle. Rough sailor, went too far though—wasn't pleased with him—no occasion to have done more than clear the premises—told him so. He was angry though, 'cause you played him trick at dinner and spoiled his waistcoat—foolish that. Seen him since, eh?"

Bernard stated that he had instantly demanded satisfaction for so gross an insult, and that they had met on the following morning. As he had formerly heard the worthy merchant express himself very strongly against duellists, he felt somewhat surprised at the light manner in which his own "affair of honour" was passed over. The fact was, that Mr. Storer asked the last and divers other questions relative to our hero's movements, not so much for the sake of information, as to ascertain whether he had in reality laid aside the odious habit of lying, together with the cause which induced it.

The result of a long conversation was favourable, and he said, "Shan't bother you any more—no use catechising—believe all you've told me—great thing to say, that, considering

what 's passed. Something to do yet though, to get out of your scrapes—stick to the truth however—shame the old un—beat him hollow—no other way. Remember me to Sir William. Shall run down to Maxdean in a few weeks—the old woman and I. Give him a call if not gone.”

“There is another individual,” murmured Bernard, “concerning whose happiness and health I hope I may yet be permitted to inquire?”

“Ay, ay—know who you mean,” replied Mr. Storer. “Very well last time we heard.”

“As you once approved my suit,” continued Bernard, taking courage as he went on—“as you once gave your consent, I trust you will not insist on our complete separation; at least, not without giving me an opportunity of explaining to Miss Storer many circumstances which I fear she misunderstands. She was once firmly convinced of the sincerity of my affection, and I flattered myself it was returned. Remember, sir, I have never been able to speak to her since I confided my fatal secret

to her ; and then her surprise and agitation were too great to allow her to judge coolly."

" Shouldn't wonder," replied Mr. Storer. " Pretty near frightened out of her senses—been the death of her if had kept her at home—wasn't your fault didn't see her afterwards, though—tried hard, eh?—got punished for it though. Bad job that Hackney business. No, no—can't say a word about Ally till you've got fairly out of your vanishing hobbles."

Bernard next entreated that he might be permitted to write to her to make known his repentance and present state of permanent visibility.

" Knows it all," replied the merchant ; " sent her Sir William's letter. No secrets among us."

" I fear, sir," said Bernard, much excited, " I sadly fear that if it were not for the hope of regaining Alicia, I should hardly, even now, be able to prevent myself from relapsing. Do not, I entreat of you, deprive me of that hope !"

" Can't commit myself," observed Mr. Storer. " Can't expect it—vanishing left sad stains—

must get whitewashed—see about it then—no hope *otherwise*—tell you that plainly, whatever the consequence may be. Tell you another thing too—rose fifty per cent. in my opinion, since come into this room—should ha' found out if had tried to humbug me. Great respect for Sir William. Haven't forgot what *you* were, before took to the flit-away concern, neither—all right. But Ally's our only child, remember—good girl—deserves to be happy—can't make consignment of her, like bale o'damaged goods to an uncertain market—run no risks with her, more than can help—can't expect it—hope all will wind up well. Respects to Sir William—got an engagement now—must be off—glad to hear how you go on—good b'ye," and shaking hands with his visiter, they parted.

Bernard felt that he had gained something by this interview; but still, the "whitewashing" of his character appeared a very doubtful case, and caused him many painful reflections and apprehensions during his journey into Northamptonshire. Among the minor troubles which attended his arrival, was the deportment

of Andrews, who obeyed every order with an air of military stiffness and exactitude, and appeared resolved not to speak unless he was spoken to, and then to make his answers as short as possible. Provoking and perplexing as this was, Bernard felt that it must be endured, at least till the arrival of his uncle, who was expected in the course of the following day, and for whose comfort he occupied himself in making preparations the first evening.

On the succeeding morning he walked into the village to see his protégé, George Burrows, and inquire after the orphans. The altered appearance of the formerly neat garden struck him while approaching. The pales were broken, and several missing at intervals; and as he drew nearer he saw some dirty children playing at the shop door, from whence they scampered round to the back of the house immediately they caught a sight of him. When the butcher himself made his appearance in the nearly empty shop, he seemed as much changed as his premises. Instead of the frank, cheerful, honest

air, for which he had formerly been remarked, a knowing, conceited, impudent sort of smile was on his countenance, and a careless recklessness in his manner.

“ Well, Burrows,” said our hero, “ I have come to inquire how you go on ?”

“ Thank ye, Sir,” replied the butcher, just touching his hat, “ among the middlings. We ha’ been flattish during the winter, principally because the work-people at the hall was all turned off; and as I didn’t hear nothing from you, I was obligated to kill that tarnation ox, and send pretty near all up to Lunnun.”

“ What ox ?” exclaimed Bernard.

“ Why, the ox as you told me you should want agin Christmas,” replied the butcher. “ Twar a terrible disappointment to the poor people; but they was obliged to content themselves with licking their chops at the sight of ’t. But the worst of it was, that the parson made me keep it till after Chrismas-day, because, he said, he ’d wrote to you about it, and knowed you ’d send an answer; and so I lost the Christ-

mas in Lunnun, and didn't get half so much, as the folks there lives upon their country presents pretty well the week arter."

Bernard felt how unfavourably the nonfulfilment of such a promise was likely to affect his popularity, and, after expressing his surprise and regret that he should have entirely forgotten the circumstance, insisted upon making Burrows amends for his loss. This hint was received with alacrity by the butcher, who began immediately to turn over the leaves of a greasy book, and make his calculations.

Though Bernard readily paid the sum stated, he could not avoid feeling disgusted at the fellow's want of delicacy, and the manner in which it was, as it were, demanded; and the alteration in the man's whole appearance and deportment struck him more forcibly than ever.

When this transaction was finished, he inquired how the children had gone on.

"Oh, we've had a deal of plague with 'em," replied Burrows. "One of 'em tumbled into the fire and burned herself. There'll be a precious long doctor's bill to pay, I look upon 't.

And my wife got ill nursing it, I think. But there, they was used to have their own way in the old woman's time, I look upon 't, and spoilt children is the very dickens. We shall pack 'em all off now though, as the days gets longer, every morning, to Miss Dashfort's national school, and there, maybe, they 'll larn manners."

Our hero was now convinced that there was something wrong in the butcher's establishment, and therefore cut short his interview, with the resolution of making inquiry respecting what had been going on in his absence.

The hint dropped concerning a doctor's bill afforded him an excuse for calling upon his old informant, Mrs. Semple, whom he found at home during her husband's absence, as usual. His business was soon made known. He came to pay for the cure of the unlucky child, and to inquire how George Burrows was going on. The little woman referred the first affair to her spouse's return, when, she said, he should come up to the hall with the bill; but on the second point, she was not only willing, but seemed eager to be heard.

The story she had to tell was somewhat too long to be given throughout in her own words ; but its substance was, that the butcher had been gradually sinking in respectability since the day when he acknowledged himself to be the author of the bell-pulling hoax. At first he had endured the “twittings” of his neighbours with a show of patience, but finding them continue, and his trade falling off, he became sullen and low-spirited ; and at last grew outrageous, and quarrelled with a small farmer, who had assisted him in his former difficulties, but had refused to trust him now that his word was not to be depended on. The consequence was a pugilistic contest, in which the butcher was victorious : and from that time he had “bullied” all the neighbourhood into silence upon the subject so offensive to him. Such conduct drove many of them from his shop, and, his trade still decreasing, he went up to London, where some said he had formed advantageous connexions for disposing of his meat, while others whispered many strange stories about his reasons for going there so frequently. It was certain, however

that since that period he had become quite an altered character, and spent most of his time at the public-house. "I am very sorry," observed Mrs. Semple, in conclusion, "to be obliged to speak so of a neighbour; but it's no more than right that you should know how things are going on, on account of the children, who are not likely to come to much good in such hands."

Bernard's next call was at the rectory, but Mr. and Mrs. Kenemall were absent, on a visit, and not expected back till the Saturday evening.

"This is a perplexing affair," thought our hero, as he strolled back to the hall. "It is evident that every action, which my fatal gift led me to perform, is productive of evil. No matter what my intentions were, the result has ever been injurious to others and myself. Here is a man, who never injured me, and whom I found honest, industrious, and happy! A foolish frolic of mine, as harmless in itself as anything of the kind could possibly be, has driven him to desperation and loss of character, and he is now pursuing a course which must ultimately

deprive him of health, and render him completely miserable. How am I to make him amends? Money will not restore *him* to his former condition, nor repurchase his good name. And his wife and children too! His once happy but now deserted fireside! And the poor orphans! what can I do with them?"

Such were his painful reflections upon the result of his well-meant endeavours to repair the consequences of one of his invisible actions; and he concluded by comforting himself with the idea of his uncle's arrival, and wisely resolving to consult him upon the subject.

CHAPTER XXX.

SIR WILLIAM AUDREY listened in silence to the story of poor George Burrows's backslidings. He then said: "I will consider his case, Bernard, and see what can be done for him. Do not abandon hope. A man who has preserved a good character, under such trying circumstances as you represent him formerly to have been in, ought not to be despaired of. I have known persons in a very superior station of life, who, in consequence of disappointments or unjust persecution, have given themselves up to a course of life which they afterwards quitted with disgust, and became valuable members of society. I don't quite like that boxing affair. The ridiculous pride of bodily strength has been a snare to many a fine fellow. You must have

seen something of the kind yourself, even among your young acquaintance; men drinking their three bottles, merely for the sake of triumphing over those of a more delicate constitution, and pluming themselves upon the achievement, as if they really believed that they had thereby established their mental superiority. But such men do not consequently always become drunkards. Any other excitement might have equally gratified them at the time. Such recklessness is often nothing more than young ambition misdirected. A certain celebrity, among a certain set, is thus gained; and the usual cure is, the breaking up and separation of that set. And then, if bad habits have not been too deeply rooted, and there be not an innate propensity to the particular vice, you would hardly know your men again in after-life.

“I remember the arrival of a young officer in the East, whose career furnishes a striking example of the manner in which even great talents may be misguided for a time, and subsequently led into a useful and praiseworthy direction. He was of a noble family, and several of his

relatives were high in the service. Few young men ever entered the profession under more flattering auspices; but his bane was a robust constitution, and an almost herculean strength of body. To display the one, and to show what liberties he could take with the other, appeared to be his sole occupation, to the utter neglect of his mind, and the very indifferent performance of his military duties. His companions were such as you may easily suppose, and he had already sunk into the character of ‘a good fellow,’ when, luckily, he got a ball through his right arm, at the storming of Seringapatam. This, and a severe illness which followed, completely changed his habits of life, first from necessity, and then from inclination. From that time he was a different man, became ardent and even enthusiastic in his profession, and has since risen, step by step, to its highest honours. No one, who knew ‘mad ensign Harry,’ could find the least resemblance between him and the same individual, now Lord ——. But I hope to introduce you to him some day. Perhaps you will think this case very inapplicable to our butcher;

but, remember, men are but men, in every station of life. This poor fellow has released himself from the taunts of his neighbours, by exerting his bodily prowess; and it can be no great wonder if he estimates his victory and himself somewhat too highly at the present moment. I dare say he has got his knot of sycophants and admirers at the public house, as strenuous in administering to *his* personal vanity, in their way, as any of the companions of my friend in the East. Now, we must, it strikes me, contrive to entice him from them. Our work-people and our own arrival will furnish him with some occupation at home, and we shall see the consequences. My greatest hopes, however, are founded on his former character. There must be some innate good in the fellow, and so, Bernard, if we do not succeed in reclaiming him here, we must transplant him into a different soil, where he will not be subject to the ill-natured taunts of his neighbours, and may take root again, and flourish, as I hope the trees may which we shall begin to set out to-morrow."

The important affair of the plantations did

not prevent Sir William from sending a message on the following day, to say that he wished to speak with the butcher, who, however, did not make his appearance; and in an hour or two it was ascertained that he had gone by the London coach, after hiring a man from a neighbouring town to attend to his business during his absence. The new trade in which he was understood to be engaged, appeared sufficient to account for this sudden journey; but, after the lapse of a few days, a visit from Mr. Kenemall threw a very different light on the affair.

Unapprised of the arrival of his respectable parishioners, the rector did not return home on the Saturday evening till too late an hour to pay his respects; but was gratified by finding on his table an invitation for dinner at the hall on the morrow.

We proceed at once to the conversation which took place after that meal, when the three gentleman were left to themselves.

“The poor people, you say, are tolerably well off,” observed Sir William, referring to what had passed while the servants were in the room.

“ Yes, Sir William,” replied the rector ; “ the coals which you instructed and furnished me so generously with the means to purchase, proved a most welcome assistance, and a great comfort to them. They got through the winter very well, and we had as little discontent as possible. There was some murmuring in consequence of a foolish mistake of the butcher’s, who took it into his head, and told some of the people who had been employed upon your grounds, that there was to be a whole ox given away at Christmas. I should not have thought the circumstance worth mentioning, only that, when the fellow was positive on the subject, I took the liberty of writing to Mr. Audrey for instructions.”

“ He told me of it,” replied Bernard ; “ but I never received your letter.”

“ I directed it to the Imperial,” said Mr. Kenemall ; “ I trust you will pardon the liberty, as I naturally thought, while absent, you ought to be informed of the use made of your name. Burrows said, positively, that you had promised, and I fancied it barely possible that

the circumstance might have slipped your memory. I had no reason *then* to suppose he would be guilty of such a misrepresentation, but, as our country people say, one must go from home to hear news of one's own parishioners, and I have heard this last week such accounts respecting him, as would induce me to credit almost any thing that might be said of him in future."

"He was not, however, so much to blame as myself in the poor people's disappointment," said Bernard; "I certainly did tell him that I should want an ox at Christmas, though I do not at all recollect mentioning the way in which it was to be disposed of. I shall take an early opportunity, however, of setting his neighbours right, and doing something for those who missed their Christmas dinner, which they certainly should not have done, had I received your letter."

The rector proceeded to pay some compliments to the young Squire on his generosity, but was interrupted by Sir William, who had invited his guest for the purpose of having a

quiet chat over parish affairs in general, and those of the butcher in particular; and he therefore inquired the nature of the accounts which his reverence had heard concerning the unfortunate man.

“ I do not mean to make the circumstance known in the village,” replied Mr. Kenemall, “ for the sake of his wife, to whom I find he has written a letter, to say that he shall *probably* be detained for some weeks in London on business. You have heard, no doubt, of a quarrel and fight which he had, some time since, with a small farmer. Of course I cannot know any thing about such things; but it seems that, on that occasion, Burrows displayed a good deal of courage, and strength, and what they call science; and unluckily some persons were present at the contest who belong to the pugilistic ring, as they style themselves, in the metropolis. Since that time they appear to have sought his acquaintance, and I understand that his visits to town, which he told me were entirely for the purpose of his business, were sometimes made for a very different cause, and

that he has been patronised by some sporting characters. The end of the affair is, that he is at this moment somewhere in training, and that is a kind of preparation before he fights as a regular boxer, in a grand match in which he is backed for a hundred guineas. These particulars I learned from overhearing a conversation between two young gentlemen, who are patrons of 'the Fancy,' as they call it; but I could not persuade them to tell me *where* the unfortunate man had been inveigled to undergo his training. They said that was a secret; and when I told them that the intended victim was one of my parishioners, and that I was a magistrate, they only laughed at me, and replied that those were additional reasons for keeping me in the dark, as I might prove to be 'a beak,' or some such term. It is really lamentable to think that young men of family and education should abandon themselves to such vulgar and barbarous amusements. What pleasure they can possibly find in them, I really cannot imagine."

Bernard expressed much regret and uneasiness at hearing this news, and said that he

should do his utmost to put a stop to the proceedings ; but Sir William, who now seemed resolved, for his nephew's comfort and encouragement, to view every thing in the most favourable light, observed, that perhaps, under all circumstances, it was as good a thing as could have happened."

"The fellow," said he, "will most likely get soundly thrashed, and that will bring him to his senses, and take the conceit out of him. I do not pretend to be very deeply versed in the *science*, but I *do* know, that it is a *very* different matter to be a village champion and a first-rate pugilist."

The butcher and his concerns were very soon lost sight of after this remark, and the rest of their conversation had no bearing upon our story.

For several succeeding weeks all went on smoothly at Audley Hall. The worthy knight occupied himself sedulously about his improvements in the park, pleasure-grounds, and gardens ; but the greatest improvement of all seemed to have taken place in himself, for in-

stead of giving way to hypochondriac affections, he became even gay and jocular. The fact, however, was, that such sallies were forced, for the purpose of keeping up the spirits of his nephew, who not unfrequently lapsed into melancholy reveries, when thinking of Alicia, his approaching trial, and the pale-faced elderly gentleman. Concerning the former, he entertained a thousand lover-like jealous fears. He knew not where she was, nor in what society; but he did know that she was afraid of him, and apparently not at all alarmed at the naval lieutenant, who had so grossly insulted him, and who perhaps at that moment might be alienating her affections from him. On other subjects, he felt that he could resign himself heroically to undergo the punishments which he sometimes confessed he merited, for the falsehoods and *et ceteras* committed during his term of occasional invisibility; but to give up Alicia was too much. The hope of reconciliation with her appeared the only thing worth striving or living for. But for this, he felt that he would have pleaded guilty to any charge

of theft or perjury which might be brought against him, and willingly quit a country in which he had already lost all his friends save one, and that one, however respected, little likely long to continue in existence.

Such were his thoughts, though perhaps he would not have acted thus, for the attachment and gratitude which he felt towards his uncle were ties not easily to be broken ; but affection for Alicia was the sheet-anchor which kept him steady in his resolution of repentance and utter abandonment of invisibility. In this respect, if not in all others, his case was similar to that of thousands of his fellow-men, whom love for a virtuous female has strengthened to endure, to persevere, and eventually to accomplish tasks and overcome difficulties which, without such incentives, would have appeared insurmountable.

A letter at length came from his counsellor to recall him to London. It stated that the trial would come on in the early part of the ensuing week, and spoke confidently of the result, but at the same time hinted that it might be as

well to keep Andrews out of the way, as he had been subpœnaed by the opposite party.

According to the straight-forward system which Sir William and our hero had now resolved to follow, this was not to be thought of; so after a consultation between them, it was resolved that the old and faithful family servant should be initiated into the mystery of the invisible secret. This step they considered would tend greatly to restore his young master to the honest fellow's good graces, as well as prevent him from giving his evidence with any indignant feeling. Sir William undertook the task, and, after solemnly swearing never to reveal what he was about to hear, the astonished and trembling valet listened, open-mouthed, to the strange tale.

"You will perceive, Andrews," said the knight in conclusion, "that the singular and unjustifiable conduct of which my nephew was guilty during that unfortunate period, was not so much his own as that of the mysterious being into whose power he was for the time delivered.

Before he came to Bath he entered into a solemn compact never again to make use of his extraordinary faculty, and consequently the demon who bestowed it has ceased to have any influence over him. You yourself have had an opportunity of remarking his conduct, and I may safely appeal to you, and ask if you have observed anything amiss?"

Poor Andrews at first could utter nothing but a few pious ejaculations, but, as soon as he was somewhat recovered, bore witness to the recent propriety of his young master's behaviour.

"I saw he was changed back again," said he, "but I couldn't tell why, and sometimes thought it was only sham, because you were here, and then I seemed to like him worse than ever for his hypocrisy. But I pity him now, for the foul fiend is too much for any mortal man. Deliver us from evil! Lead us not into temptation! What a shocking thing it is! Why, the Brahmin I heard you tell Doctor Chaseblue about was nothing to this concern!"

"I am afraid," observed Sir William, with

an involuntary sigh, “sadly afraid, that they are connected. But I will not give way to melancholy forebodings.”

“No, don’t, Sir, pray !” exclaimed Andrews. “Remember how ill they made you in London. I thought there was something more than common at the bottom of it then, though they said they was only the blue devils.”

Sir William then proceeded to tell Andrews that he must go up to London to give evidence, if called upon, “but,” he continued, “I am not sure that you will be wanted, as Bernard talks of pleading guilty, though I have endeavoured to persuade him to the contrary. You will thus see that he has returned to his former detestation of anything which might even *seem* like a lie, and my confidence in him, in that respect, is completely restored. But I still think his objection too scrupulous, as I understand he is accused of theft ; and after all, it was but an exchange of clothes, and somewhat, as far as I can make out, in favour of his accuser ; besides which, I am sure, on reflection, he would have returned those he took, if they

had not been discovered by accident, so very unexpectedly and suddenly."

"To be sure he would," said Andrews; "what should he want with another gentleman's old clothes, when he has got such lots of his own?"

While this conference was going on in the hall, our hero, in order to be out of the way, and scarcely knowing what to do with himself during the interval, had strolled into the park. The necessity of letting Andrews into his secret was not a matter of great importance; but his pride was mortified at the idea that he should become an object of pity to his servant.

"What endless vexations, great and small, has that accursed interview entailed upon me!" he exclaimed, and was terminating his ejaculation in the usual way, by maledictions against the white-faced, elderly personage, when the church bell on which he had once performed a most unfortunate *solo*, began tolling. "Well," thought he, "*this* time I cannot *possibly* have any responsibility on my shoulders," and he walked leisurely toward the venerable building,

thinking of those who had formerly visited the spot with him. By the time he entered the churchyard, the tolling ceased; and shortly after old Timothy, the clerk, made his appearance, and informed him that a young woman belonging to an adjoining hamlet was to be buried that afternoon.

“ Her friends be in a bit of a flustration,” he continued, “ thinking as how her body will be stole, and means to keep guard here, turn and turn, for a week to come. Time was when I wouldn’t ha’ believed nothing o’ the sort — but now I’d believe anything, seeing what I’ve seed, and knowing what I knows. What the world’ll come to at last, I’m sure I can’t think — but there, it gets worse and worse every day — I knows that.”

“ There surely cannot be any people of the description you allude to in such a retired neighbourhood as this?” said Bernard.

The old man shook his grey head in reply.

“ You must have some ground for the notion,” continued our hero, “ and I hope you will not conceal it from me, for I shall make it

my business to protect this spot myself, if any such infamous villainy is really to be apprehended."

"There has been two corpses watched here already," said Timothy; "but nobody come. They knowed pretty well what war going on, I look upon't. But him as they trusts to be'ant here now, and some thinks he keeps out o' the way o' purpose as they mightn't suspect nothing."

Bernard had some farther difficulty before he could get the old man to be explicit; but at length he referred to the former mysterious tolling of the bell, and the blood that had been found upon a grave, and gave it as his opinion that it was a trick played by the body-snatchers, (whom he described as cunning enough to outwit king Solomon,) in order to persuade the people that the church was haunted, and so prevent them from coming near it at night.

"But you talked of some one whom they trust to here," observed Bernard; "who is he?"

Here there was more head-shaking and demurring than before, on the part of the ancient gravedigger; but, as the young squire insisted on his speaking out, he eventually named poor Burrows, whose connexion with the people in question he stated to have been discovered by a paragraph in the London papers, from which it appeared that the said delinquent had been taken up, with a dead body in his possession.

“ I see’d it *in print* myself,” continued Timothy; “ we used all to wonder how he got on so fast, and paid every body, and lent his father ever so much money beside, when he was as poor as a church mouse but t’other day,— but it come out at last. He purtended as he went up to London so often to sell meat. Meat indeed! — it makes one’s blood run cold to think of ’t. He must make a pretty sight o’ money though by ’t, for none of our folks as can help it, ever goes to his shop now, but a don’t seem to care for that a morsel, but sits at the public house drinking and smoking pretty well all day just like a gentleman.”

“ I shall attend the funeral this afternoon,” said Bernard, “ and I believe it will be in my power to set the people’s mind at ease.”

This promise he duly performed, and his account of the hackney coach adventure, and his having assumed the name of Burrows in order to conceal his own, was corroborated by Sir William, and vouched for by the rector, who, as every body present knew, was in town at the time.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AS the trial of our unlucky hero approached, his peculiar case had become the subject of conversation in various circles where he was more or less known. The ridiculous nature of his offence in the first instance, his extraordinary and false accusation of John Stubbs, the still more wonderful and sudden change in his character, the circumstances of his duels, respecting which there was more than a whisper of foul play,—all these, together with such vague reports as are usually afloat concerning any individual who attracts public notice, tended to excite a great interest among his old companions. The consequence was a crowded court when the important day arrived. Lord Norcourt and nearly the whole of the me-

morale breakfast party were present, together with Captain Brown and the two naval lieutenants.

Bernard's objections to pleading "Not guilty," had been much shaken by Sir William's arguments, and his counsel told him, that so far from avoiding a falsehood, he would be telling a downright lie in affirming himself to be guilty of stealing, when he had only made an exchange, for which Captain Popwell ought to have felt very much obliged. Still he mentally hesitated, till the words of the indictment accusing him of burglariously breaking in violently through doors and windows, and being armed and furnished with various implements, settled the question. To such accusations he felt (whether fastidiously or not let the reader decide) that he could not truly acknowledge himself guilty.

"This," thought he, as he entered the court, "*this* is my greatest, and I trust will be my last degradation. On the event of this trial depend my hopes of possessing Alicia. I will be firm, and, if called upon to say anything for

myself, will relate the circumstances precisely as they occurred, with the exception of my invisibility, which would only tend to throw doubt upon the rest of my statement, as of course I cannot *now* give any proof of possessing such an incredible power."

The proceedings opened in due form, and the counsel for the prosecution had stated the facts of the case, and was about to speak of the unfounded accusation made against the poor groom, when Counsellor Hawker objected to any irrelevant matter being introduced. A few words then passed in a low tone between the two advocates, who soon appeared to understand each other, and he who had been addressing the court threw down his brief and seated himself.

No one present felt more surprised than Bernard, when Counsellor Hawker immediately rose, and addressed the court to the following effect.

"My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury.—As the preservation of a fair and unspotted fame is dear to every honourable mind, I trust you will pardon me for not having previously availed

myself of a legal objection, which I shall have the honour of stating to your lordship, after having said a few words with which I trust you will indulge me, as by that means *alone* the very respectable individual, on whose behalf I address you, will be enabled to resume his station in society. Not a breath of calumny had hitherto touched his name till this ridiculous accusation of a crime, whereof, even if he were guilty, he need scarcely have been ashamed, inasmuch as the deed, committed by whom it may, was evidently nothing more than a frolic. But malignant reports have lately been industriously spread concerning him, and he has now been publicly charged with robbery, and brought to a criminal bar. This, my lord, as you must sensibly be aware, is outrageous to the feelings of a gentleman whose course has ever been marked, not only by the strictest propriety, but conspicuous for high notions of honour and the most exemplary conduct. At Oxford, my lord, that venerable and ancient seat of learning, at the celebrated college of Christ Church, among young men

of high rank, his associates, his intimate friends were ever those, and those *only*, whose characters and conduct were above reproach. And in such esteem was he always held by them, as well as by his elders, for his love of truth, that his very name passed into a proverb, and it was a common thing to say, when expressing an opinion concerning any event, ‘I believe it as firmly as if Bernard Audrey had seen it and told me.’ For the truth of this statement, though I hold in my hand letters from the principal and tutors of that college, I can boldly appeal to a nobleman now in court, and several other gentlemen sitting near him. On that nobleman, my lord, I should have called to prove that the prisoner was positively sitting at dinner with him, at the precise time when he is stated to have committed the robbery ; and, if there could have existed any doubts in your minds, gentlemen of the jury, respecting the *precise* time, I am ready to prove, by the evidence of a most respectable attorney, that my client was engaged in legal business with him on the day in question up to an hour which

scarcely afforded him sufficient time to fulfil his dinner engagement with the noble lord. We have other irresistible corroborating evidence—but surely what I have said must be more than sufficient to remove even the shadow of a stain from the spotless character of the gentleman before you ! Perhaps I have done wrong in making known to my learned brother a circumstance which has had the effect of deterring him from bringing forward that evidence which we could so triumphantly have controverted. The blame of that step must remain on my own shoulders, as it was the express wish of my client that the trial should have taken its course. My motive was to save the valuable time of the court, which has with such magnanimity and patience listened to my justification of a calumniated and honourable individual. Having thus publicly had an opportunity of stating the proofs of the impossibility of my client's guilt, I add only that documents shall be open to the inspection of any gentleman who may take an interest in his character. The ends of justice could only be

gained by this *public* refutation of a *public* charge; and now, my lord, I beg leave to call your attention ——”

What he afterwards had to say was merely technical, relative to certain legal forms; but we are sorry to add, that there was, subsequently, too much reason to suspect that a part of the secret service money, formerly alluded to by Counsellor Hawker, had been employed in bewildering a poor attorney's clerk to such a degree, that he omitted certain words in the indictment, by which the whole proceedings were quashed.

Right glad as Bernard naturally was to get through this formidable affair so easily, he was far from being satisfied with the speech of his counsel, and took the first opportunity of inquiring what he could possibly have meant by stating that he had been engaged, with an attorney, on legal business, on the day in question.”

“Here is his day-book,” replied the wily advocate, smiling, “and doubtless he would not have denied his own hand-writing. Here is your name, fairly entered—Yes—a long consul-

tation, you seem to have left his office at twenty minutes before seven, very precise and very satisfactory."

Bernard took the book, and too clearly guessed the reason why he had been advised to purchase the three obscure tenements in the borough.

"If the man has, by accident, made a mistake in the date," continued Hawker, "*that* is no affair of ours. He is a very good, useful sort of fellow, I am told, though I know him only by sight. My father has employed him though, on several occasions, and I believe always had reason to be satisfied with him. All that I can say is, the evidence was tendered, voluntarily, to me, and of course I thought it too important to be rejected."

To explain this nefarious transaction, it is necessary to remind the reader that the not very scrupulous counsellor was in the habit of consulting his still less scrupulous father; and the old miser, after listening to our hero's case, thought of a plan, by which he might serve himself and his hopeful son at the same time. The attorney in question was one of the lowest of,

and a disgrace to, his profession ; a suspicion that his character might be too well known, prevented the Counsellor from bringing him, personally, before the court, in a case where all must have depended upon the credit given to his evidence. In *speaking* of him, however, without mentioning his name, every purpose would be answered by dubbing him ‘a most respectable attorney.’

Now, Sir Close Hawker, among his other schemes for increasing his accumulated and useless wealth, had purchased a leasehold property in the worst part of the borough of Southwark, consisting of small tenements, which he let out, at exorbitant weekly rents, to poor people. The management of this property, and the hebdominal collection of the said rents, was entrusted to the said characterless attorney, who, about the time of Bernard’s troubles, had reported to his master, that three of the tenantry were unable to pay up their arrears, and that they not only were without furniture sufficient to make a seizure advisable, but obstinately refused to quit the premises. He added, moreover, that

the dilapidations, owing to their mode of living, were going on at such a rate that, if they were not speedily ejected, he verily believed the houses would tumble about their ears; but at all events a considerable sum of money *must* be expended before they could be made habitable for other tenants. Under these circumstances Sir Close would, doubtless, have sold them a bargain to the first bidder; but he did not see why he should let poor Bernard have them particularly cheap.

“I think I shall be able to send you a customer for those three houses,” said he to his agent, on the morning after his interview with the counsellor. “Mind, I shall expect two hundred pounds for them, *from you*; so make the best bargain you can, and you may pocket the rest on certain conditions.”

“Two hundred pounds!” exclaimed the lawyer; “You must mean Dutch auction, Sir Close. I don’t think any man in his senses would take them off your hands for much less.”

“Don’t depreciate my property, Sir!” said the miserable old man. “I know what I am

talking about. All you have to do is to sell the houses to a gentleman whom I shall send to you ; and I am pretty sure you may make your own terms, if you will detain him, when he first calls upon you, till twenty minutes to seven o'clock, and enter the consultation in your books for the date I give you. *Then*, as I said, but *not* otherwise, you may pocket all you get above the two hundred, and I won't take a farthing less."

The two wretched beings too soon understood each other, and our hero paid three hundred pounds for what were described to him as "three desirable tenements, let to respectable tenants at will for ten pounds eight shillings each *per annum*, subject only to a trifling annual payment of fifteen shillings to the lord of the manor," &c.

When Sir Close had received his share of the money, he told his son that he had, by good luck, discovered where his client had been engaged at the time of the robbery, whereupon the son expressed great surprise and satisfaction, and paid his father many compliments, which

the despicable old man returned by shaking him warmly by the hand, and saying, " You see I am always thinking about you and your interests, my dear boy. This affair cannot possibly be of any consequence to me, but I do not grudge a little sacrifice now and then, for the sake of giving you a lift in your profession. I'm afraid I lost a turn on the Stock Exchange while looking after this business, but never mind — never mind ; we shall make it up, perhaps, another time. You must exert yourself a little among your friends, and get me a vote or two for Sir Marmaduke Bonus, who is a particular acquaintance of my worthy friend Storer, the East India merchant, and I have a great wish to oblige him. I always like to serve my friends, and as he has taken it into his head that I have a good deal of interest, I am afraid he would be sadly disappointed if we could do nothing for him, and really it would give me much pleasure to oblige him, for he is a very worthy man."

The son well knew his father's motives for wishing to oblige Mr. Storer ; and, indeed, in

all that passed between them there was no real deception. But the habits of deceit, selfish scheming, and hypocrisy, had been so long practised by both, that whenever they met, it seemed to be understood that its forms were to be kept up as those of etiquette in society; and when mutual and disinterested good wishes, sacrifices, desire of serving friends, &c. were talked of, each felt that no more was meant than by the asking of "a thousand pardons" for nothing among other people, or by the assurance of his remaining "Your most obedient, humble servant," at the end of a letter, in which the writer arrogantly refuses to do anything that is required of him. But enough for the present of old Sir Close Hawker.

When Bernard had looked at his own name, entered in due form at the convenient date, he returned the book to his counsel, observing with a sigh, "Had I known of this before, sir, I certainly would not have permitted it."

"Pshaw," said Hawker, "it is always best to have two strings to one's bow. If the indictment had not turned out *as I expected*, this

would have been the only leg we could have stood upon."

"I understand you now but too well," exclaimed Bernard, indignantly. "I *now* perceive the meaning of secret service money; but let me tell you, sir, that had I had the smallest idea of *how* it was to be employed, I certainly never would have accepted your services."

"The old story," observed the counsellor, sarcastically. "It is well that we are paid beforehand, or upon my word we should come off but indifferently. However, it is scarcely worth your while to affect the Simon Pure, and pick a quarrel with me, as I dare say you will be glad enough to come to me again when your trial for perjury comes on. I suppose you know that Stubbs, your late groom, is in the service of Captain Brown; and let me tell you, that he and his father, (who cares not what he spends,) are savage enough against you to carry things to the utmost extremity."

Shocked as Bernard was at the idea of another public trial, he determined never again to be indebted for escape to such iniquitous pro-

ceedings, and expressed his resolutions and sentiments very openly and freely to Counsellor Hawker, who listened with exemplary patience, having made it a rule never to quarrel with a fat goose of a client till he had done picking him to the bone.

“ Well, Mr. Audrey,” said he, “ I agree with you that these things *are* very bad, but we must, in our profession, take men as we find them, and use them as tools, without inquiring how they came to be in such a form. You will please, however, to understand, that I had no hand in *procuring* either of the two strong points in your case ; but when they were offered to me, I could not, in conscience, avoid making use of them. I may have had my suspicions certainly, but no opinion of mine was required on that score. All I had to do was to act in the best way I could for your interest, and the end has been satisfactory. I hope you will have no farther occasion for my services, but if you should, I shall certainly pursue the same course, and avail myself of every advantage which may present itself, either in the way

of legal technicality or evidence, for the benefit of my client."

On the afternoon of that important day, Bernard had an interview with Mr. Storer, to whom he related every particular of the transaction, and expressing his detestation of it in terms which wrought favourably upon the mind of his hearer,

"Never mind—never mind," said the worthy merchant; "none of your doing—shouldn't have bought the houses, though—ought to have suspected something wrong—very green that—"

"I believe, in the state of mind in which I then was," replied Bernard, "I should have done anything Mr. Hawker told me. I had entire confidence in him then. I *could not* think for myself."

"Believe you—believe you," said Mr. Storer, "shouldn't though, if hadn't been for your former character. All true your counsel said—was in court myself. Didn't see me? eh?—Spoke to one of your old acquaintance. Told

me the same — all right. Going back to Audrey Hall, suppose ?”

“ I have written to my uncle, and shall certainly return immediately,” replied Bernard, “ but I could not leave town without seeing you, sir, and I do hope you will not now refuse to allow me an interview with Miss Storer.”

“ Mustn’t ask me any more about that,” said the merchant ; “ talk it over to Sir William.— Be down at Maxdean in a week or two — have a quiet chat.”

“ If you will permit me only to write to her,” said Bernard, “ I will endeavour to be satisfied ; but *entire* separation is too painful to be endured. You surely will grant me this very simple request ?”

“ Who’d be simple then, wonder ?” exclaimed Mr. Storer. “ No, no — let her alone — mustn’t be bothered — had a sad time of it lately — frightened to death pretty near — pokes about with a stick, she and Charlotte, every fresh room they go to — daren’t speak a word else.”

“ Though it grieves me to think that I should still be subject to suspicion,” observed Bernard, “ I trust you will excuse me for saying that a letter from a distance would tend to set her mind at ease ; and therefore, if it be merely on *her* account, let me entreat you——”

“ Not now—not now,” replied her father. “ Must see Sir William — can’t say anything before — not sure you are quite out of the wood yet, neither—made terrible enemies. Old Brown’s a sticker, take what he will in hand.”

Our hero, after the fashion of all true lovers, stuck to his point as long as there appeared to be any chance, and for some time afterwards ; and then, finding the merchant still inflexible, he left him, and went and booked himself for Northamptonshire.

The coach by which he left town, on the following morning, was full both within and without, and had not proceeded far on its journey ere he was struck with the unusual number of vehicles, of all descriptions, which they passed upon the road.

“ They will have a fine day for the sport,” observed a gentleman who sat opposite to him.

“ What sport ?” inquired Bernard.

“ What ! don’t you know ?” exclaimed the other ; “ why, I ’ve heard nothing else talked of for this fortnight. The match between gimlet-eyed Tom and a yakel, a new ’un, that hasn’t been tried yet fairly, a Northamptonshire man, a butcher, they say. He’s to fight under the name of Smith, though it’s not his own, that his friends mayn’t know if he gets licked, as I expect he will. But, there’s no knowing, as bets were even at Belcher’s last night, though odds were taken at the other castle at Moorgate, upon the new man ; but he’ll find the gimlet-eye an ugly and troublesome customer.”

This information plunged Bernard into a fit of thinking ; and the result of his cogitations was a determination to quit the coach at St. Alban’s, near which place the fight was to take place.

“ I have been the original cause,” thought he, “ of reducing the poor man to this situa-

tion, and it is therefore my duty to render him every assistance in my power."

Several anxious hours passed slowly away. Reports came that the fight had commenced, and the new man had given the first knock-down blow. Bernard in vain endeavoured to persuade the surgeon whom he had engaged, to go to the field, and his reason for refusing was one which afforded little comfort. He said that the men were both understood to be "game," and would rather die on the spot, than give in.

Something like this proved, indeed, eventually to be the case; for, after fighting for nearly two hours, Burrows, being unable "to come to time," was left almost senseless upon the ground, while his adversary was carried off in triumph, in a barouche and four.

No time was lost in removing the fallen man to the inn, where he received every attention. The surgeon shook his head, thereby intimating that it was a doubtful case, and ordered that his patient should be kept perfectly quiet. And quiet enough the poor fellow remained in a

sleepy stupor, till the middle of the night, when, as the Irish nurse who was hired to sit up with him said, “ he came to his senses and was light-headed.”

In the course of the following day, however, a change for the better took place, and Bernard, before he left the town, had the painful satisfaction of being told by the physician that, but for his having been on the spot to ensure prompt and efficacious medical aid, the affair would probably have terminated fatally.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WE must now refer back to the evening when our invisible hero amused himself by peppering neighbour Syms's wine, and was afterwards caught, swaddled, lectured, and most unkindly dismissed.

On that occasion Alicia and Charlotte, alarmed at what had occurred during dinner, moved off without beat of drum, and were soon snugly housed in the quiet dwelling-place of the quiet needle-plying old lady at Hackney. When they retired for the night, Miss Read armed herself with her parasol, and waved, poked, and thrust it into every hole and corner, till perfectly convinced that her friend's invisible pursuer was not present, and then they held a consultation respecting their next place of refuge.

“ I cannot ask you to go to our house,” observed Charlotte, “ for I am confident, by his using Mr. Syms’s name, that he was the person caught in the man-trap. Indeed, nobody else could have made his escape in such an extraordinary manner as they describe. It is plain, however, that he was not much hurt, or we should not have seen what we have to-day.”

“ It is extremely perplexing,” said Alicia. “ It is evident that he has been here too, and got into the house the morning we left. Those openings of the parlour door, which annoyed our good old hostess, must have been his doing.”

“ No doubt of it,” said Charlotte. “ He seems determined to persevere, and if you will not consent to see him, I fear you will be constantly subject to this sort of persecution.”

“ I *cannot* see him !” sighed Alicia. “ I know my own weakness, and I again confess to you that I dare not trust myself alone with him. Do not despise me, my dearest friend ! Remember what our situation has been, and how short a time it is since we were *all but* united

for life. Duty and reason tell me that I must banish him from my mind, but it cannot be suddenly. Had I known of this mysterious affair in the first instance, the task might have been easy—but I cannot forget what he has been: how perfectly amiable! You yourself told me you could almost envy me, when we were at Maxdean together. Oh! how happy we all were then!”

“My sweet girl,” said Charlotte, “you must endeavour to prevent your thoughts from wandering to those times. You *know* he is not *now* the same character that he then appeared to be. You have taken your resolution, and indeed you must not look back.”

“Ah, Charlotte!” sighed the poor girl, “you never knew what it was to be in love! if you had, you would not talk thus. I know that I *must* give him up—I feel that nothing but misery could be the result of being united to one possessed of such a shocking power—but, I pity him from my soul! I cannot tell you how much I pity him—and pity, you know, they *say*, is akin to love. I am strong in reso-

lution, Charlotte — I *will* persevere ; —but I feel that a meeting would be too distressing for me to endure at present.”

The two friends continued this sort of conversation till they fell asleep, but without being able to come to any decision respecting their next place of retreat. That question was, however, settled for them next morning by the arrival of Mr. Storer in his carriage, at the unusually early hour of eight.

“ Surprised to see me so soon, eh ?” said he to the old lady, whom he found already in the parlour.

“ Always glad to see you, sir,” was the reply. “ I hope there is nothing the matter at home. My dear friend your good lady is well, I hope ?”

“ Nothing the matter with her,” answered the blunt merchant. “ Tough, tough — born before nerves came into fashion. Girls not up yet ? Must rout ’em out, ma’am — take ’em with me. Long way to go — go and call ’em myself.”

Accordingly he ascended the narrow stairs,

and knocking unceremoniously at the young ladies' apartment, told them to "tumble up," as the only chance of outmanœuvring the invisible gentleman was by moving early. On descending to the little parlour, he surprised the old gentlewoman by requesting her to call in her maid, who was occupied, as usual, in scouring the already spotless steps.

"Do that after we're gone, ma'am," said he. "Particular reason — never mind what. Got my whims, you know — everybody got some."

The girl was accordingly withdrawn from her outpost, and then Mr. Storer astonished his hostess still more by seizing the poker and flourishing it in all directions.

"All right," he observed, replacing the weapon in its place. "Dare say you wonder to see me in a bustle — wonder more if told you why, though. Never mind — not mad — *compos mentis* enough — only bothered a little about Ally. Good girl! — must get her out of the way. Quarter past eight! Long time dressing! — can't think what they're about — no shaving to do. Do hurry 'em, that's a good lady. Long

way to go. Must be back in the city at eleven, or think I'm lost."

The poor old gentlewoman instantly repaired to the chamber of her young friends, and in spite of the merchant's assurance that he was in possession of his senses, deemed it her duty to whisper into Charlotte's ear something of the pokerizing display of agility which she had just witnessed. Miss Read immediately communicated the secret to Alicia, and they both assured their venerable hostess that she need not feel any apprehension, as it was a sort of custom which they had all latterly practised. The old lady thought it the strangest custom she had ever heard of, and could not avoid suspecting that the young ladies' coolness on the subject was a proof that the worthy merchant had occasional fits of flightiness.

"Come," said Mr. Storer, meeting them as they descended, "jump into the carriage; not a moment to spare."

"Surely you will breakfast first!" exclaimed the old lady.

"No time for that," replied the merchant;

“Breakfast by and by. Good morning, much obliged to you for care of the girls—can’t stop with you any longer now—wife give you a call in course of day, or to-morrow at farthest.” The last words were spoken as they descended the whitewashed steps, and approached the carriage. “Don’t stay in the cold, Ma’am,” he continued. “See you don’t know what to make of it—never mind—strange world we live in—odd ways many of us have got.”

The old lady thought so indeed, when, immediately the young ladies were seated, he whisked nimbly round to the back part of the carriage, and flourished his gold-headed cane in the same fencing-like style which he had previously practised with her parlour poker. After this strange exhibition, which afforded considerable mirth to some dirty, gaping boys, he briskly stepped inside, nodded and smiled at the astonished elderly gentlewoman, and Peter the coachman, having previously received his orders, scarcely allowed the footman time to

scramble up, ere he drove off at a rate more like that of a racing opposition stage than befitting the family carriage of a steady, respectable merchant.

“Made the old lady open her eyes this morning,” said Mr. Storer, as they went whirling along. “Wide awake—thinks she’s dreaming though, look upon ’t. Never mind—mother call and set all right. Tell her I’m not mad, at all events. Put you into snug quarters this morning. Clever girl, Charlotte—right about man-trap business. Won’t do to go to your house. Asked Syms last night—description tallies exactly. Flit-away revenged upon him yesterday. Peppered his wine. Terrible bad all night—better this morning—no great harm done, look upon ’t.”

He then proceeded, in a more regular way, to give an account of what had passed the preceding evening, and expressed his dissatisfaction at the unnecessary violence of the lieutenant. Alicia likewise felt extremely indignant at it, and, withal, somewhat uneasy respect-

ing the consequences, inasmuch as she was convinced that Bernard was a person very unlikely to submit tamely to such an insult.

The place of their destination was an overgrown mansion, on the borders of Epping forest, standing in a spacious garden, inclosed by high and massy walls. It had formerly been the residence of a wealthy mercantile family, and now was occupied as a school, by a lady who found some difficulty in keeping up her establishment to the extent of its capability. Having continued on a friendly footing with Mrs. Storer from the time when they were children at school together, she had lately written to request her influence and recommendations among her supposed numerous acquaintance. This application seemed precisely *apropos* to the worthy merchant and his wife; and as both the lady and her daughter were personally, though not intimately, known to Alicia and Charlotte, the arrangement was perfectly satisfactory to them likewise.

“No danger of his coming this way,” said Mr. Storer. “Neither the road to Bath,

Northamptonshire, or Clapham. Do as you like—have your own rooms—mix with young people or not—please yourselves—invite Emily, if you will, or anybody else. Make yourselves comfortable. Won't be for long. Got a scheme in my head. Please you—sure of that. Days too short now though. Tell you more about it another day."

On their arrival at their new place of refuge, the merchant despatched all arrangements with mercantile celerity during a hasty breakfast, after which he took an affectionate leave of his daughter and her friend, and returned to town.

"What an extraordinary fate is mine!" thought Alicia. "Here I am, pursued and trembling at the very idea of a being with whom, but the other day, I had resolved to spend the whole of my life. It is evident that his affection is not abated, or he would not seek me thus. And can I expect always to hide myself from one possessed of such an extraordinary power? What might he not do, if driven to desperation! I dare not think of it! If I do, I really believe it will drive me mad."

Charlotte did all she could to comfort the poor girl, and to wean her still lingering affections from that “mysterious person,” as they both now generally styled our hero; but she never allowed her friendly zeal to carry her beyond the limits of strict truth. She represented him as the unfortunate victim of his own foolish wish, by the gratification of which he was placed out of the pale of society, and never could expect again to be received in it. No one could possibly place any confidence in such a person, and he must ever, she argued, continue an object of suspicion to, and be beheld with terror by, his fellow creatures.

Alicia acknowledged all this, and her imagination told her a great deal more. She was resolved to conquer, and eventually to get rid of every predilection; but, in spite of herself, her memory would perversely be ever recurring to the past—and then—“if,” she thought, “I could but pull his ears with impunity, we might even yet be happy.”

Nothing particular occurred during the first day of their residence in their new abode; but

the newspaper of the next morning contained an account of two "affairs of honour," in both of which one gentleman was a principal, and had wounded each of his adversaries. The initials Mr. B * * A * * and Lieutenant B * *, R.N., were sufficient to indicate the first couple; but who Captain P * * was, our fair friends could not imagine. Alicia, pale, trembling, and with quivering lips, perused the paragraph, and then let the paper fall, and burst into tears, from which she soon partially recovered, and gasped convulsively, "I can't blame him!"

Charlotte looked at her friend, and was sorry to perceive something very like a glow of admiration on her countenance, as though she felt a secret pride in the display of courage made by "the mysterious person" on that occasion. It was an evil omen, she thought, but judged not the passing moment to be the best for noticing it.

In a subsequent column of the newspaper, they found another, stating that Captain P * * was pronounced to be in a dangerous state, and that there were some awkward reports afloat

respecting the manner in which he had received his wound.

“ If the poor man should die ! ” thought Alicia. “ How dreadful to have the life of a fellow-creature to answer for ! Poor Bernard ! What will he do ? What will become of him ? ” But she had not proceeded far in her strain of commiseration, ere she found comfort from the same cause which had produced her own unhappiness. A man possessed of the power of making himself invisible at a moment’s notice, was neither in danger of being apprehended, tried, nor hanged, unless such was his own free-will and pleasure. Still the idea of murder was too dreadful to be thought of ; and she felt that if the unfortunate man should die, another insurmountable barrier would be placed between her and that mysterious personage.

A few days, however, removed all apprehensions on that head, as the papers, of course, contained those favourable accounts respecting Captain Popwell, which we have already stated were given to all inquirers.

Scarcely was Alicia’s mind relieved from this

fresh anxiety, when she received a visit from her father, who informed her of Bernard's vow and resolution never again to make use of his extraordinary gift, and that he was now reconciled to his uncle, and residing with him at Bath. "So may go back home with me if you like," continued Mr. Storer, "or stay here; please yourselves — nothing to fear now. Forget him altogether. No more upsetting plates — no more peppered wine, boa-constrictors, nor mandarin smashing — take our meals in comfort again, hope."

Alicia returned home, accompanied by her friend; but it was not the same with her as formerly. She became pale, and subject to long fits of absence, would start at the smallest sound, and never left or entered a room, if possible, without clinging to Charlotte's arm. These were painful symptoms for her fond parents to witness, and they strove to divert her mind by making parties among their young acquaintance; but all in vain, and a circumstance which occurred at one of these entertainments, made a deep impression on poor Mr.

Storer. Even if he had been disposed to “look out for a husband” for his daughter, under existing circumstances, he could scarcely have been blamed ; but his motive for inviting Lieutenant Bonus was simply because he was a gay, good-tempered, good-looking, lively young fellow, whose company had previously appeared agreeable to the young ladies.

Whether the seaman had begun to entertain any serious thoughts of Alicia, must be a matter of uncertainty ; but nothing could be more certain than that, on the present occasion, she was extremely serious whenever he addressed her. Fortunately she had become engaged too deep when he first solicited her hand for a quadrille. The sets were animated, and she appeared to enjoy herself more than usual ; but when his turn came, she pleaded fatigue, and danced no more the whole evening.

“Humph !” said her father to her mother ; “love me, love my dog. That kick sticks in her gizzard. No chance for the blue-jacket. Seemed in high spirits just now too — don’t like the looks of it — try something else.”

There was a long curtain conference between the worthy couple that night, and the result was a trip to Brighton.

“I can generally manage to spend three days in the week with you,” said he. “Down Friday or Saturday — up Monday or Tuesday. Do us all good. Make Ally bathe, walk, ride Days getting longer — got something else in my head for spring — no use talking about that now, though. Must get all square in Mincing Lane first — no use leaving things at sixes and sevens. What’s that? Three o’clock! Terrible hours. Good night! — must go to sleep.”

But the worthy merchant did not — could not go to sleep. He lay long awake, thinking of his daughter, and poor Sir William, and the recently invisible gentleman. He felt that Alicia had not yet made much progress in weaning herself from the latter, and he could not help indulging a sort of vague hope that the young man might, now he had abandoned the use of his strange gift, prove eventually not unworthy of her affection. Still he considered there was a great deal of “up hill work” to be done

before he could recover his character. The conclusion of his cogitations was, that his own conduct must be guided entirely by the state of his daughter's health and spirits. If she recovered both, all would be well, and her old tormenting lover might go and seek another wife where he could. In the mean while he judged it most prudent not to drive him to despair, and was strengthened in that course by certain kind and compassionate feelings towards Sir William. This will serve to account for his behaviour to our hero in their subsequent interviews.

The little party at Brighton was increased by the presence of Emily Hitchins, who warmly seconded Charlotte in every endeavour to rouse the spirits of their mutual friend. The name of Bernard Audrey had seldom been mentioned, when the account of his trial for stealing a suit of clothes appeared in the newspapers, accompanied by certain remarks, very favourable to the accused and his counsel, and extremely severe against his prosecutors.

“I fear he was guilty, notwithstanding,” said Alicia. “If you observe the date, which

is too distinctly imprinted on *my* mind, you will find it to be the same when *we* know he was at Hackney,—and as for the dirty clothes left behind, remember the state of the little front garden and steps the next morning.”

“ But then, my dear,” observed Emily, whose kind heart ever led her to find an excuse for everybody, “ how could he have been engaged, as you see he was, at the lawyer’s ?”

Alicia looked at Charlotte, who shook her head, and they both felt convinced that the accused had not only committed and denied the deed, but had likewise procured false witness to favour his escape. The more fully they considered the circumstances, the more clearly it appeared to them that such must be the case; and even Emily joined in expressing her detestation of a line of defence so very wicked, *if*, indeed, it were possible for any one to have adopted it.

“ Let us hope it is not so,” said she. Perhaps the newspapers have made a mistake in the date; or maybe the lawyer, in the hurry of business, put down the wrong hour.”

“ I should be sorry to be uncharitable,” observed Charlotte, gravely, “ but after what we have heard and witnessed, I cannot say that I am surprised, *even at this.*”

When Alicia was next alone, she chided herself severely for permitting any remains of affection to linger in her breast towards one who could act thus basely.

“ It is too evident,” she thought, “ too evident that, though he may have forsworn the use of his dreadful secret, he has not abandoned the course of falsehood into which he fell during that mysterious period. From henceforth I will banish him entirely from my thoughts. Fallen and degraded as he is,” she continued with a feeling of indignant pride, “ persevering in his wickedness, what *can* he be to me but an object of detestation and horror? I know not now even if I can pity him. No—I will neither name nor think of him more !”

For some following days, her parents and friends were highly delighted at the great change in the poor girl’s manners and conduct. Instead of allowing herself, as before, to be

enticed from home, she was now the first to propose little excursions and parties of pleasure, and evidently used every exertion to banish the past from her mind.

All was going well, when, suddenly, as she was walking on the Steyne one morning with Charlotte, she exclaimed, "Oh! I am sure he is here! I felt him touch me!"

"My dear girl! There is no one near us," replied Charlotte. "Do not give way to such strange fancies. You know he has entirely abandoned ——"

"I cannot explain myself here," whispered Alicia, clinging timidly to her friend, "Come home! Let us go home, and I will tell you."

After entering her room with all those precautions which they had latterly neglected, she persisted in affirming that the invisible mysterious person had touched her on the Steyne.

"How I could be so weak as to place any confidence in his promise never again to make use of that dreadful gift, I know not. I might have concluded that one who scruples

not to suborn false evidence, would scarcely hesitate to break his own word."

Miss Read had previously been subject to certain unpleasant feelings on the same ground, but strove to comfort her friend by assuring her that our hero was then with his uncle in Northamptonshire. When, however, she found all her efforts unavailing, she took the first opportunity of speaking to Mr. Storer on the subject.

"Can't think it," said he. "Was at Audrey Hall last week, safe enough. Wouldn't have been such a fool as to touch her, at any rate. Meant go to Maxdean myself next week — can't make much difference — go directly. Set that matter straight. Write directly. Good girl for telling me — no secrets. Give me a kiss. Good girl — glad Ally's got such a friend."

In less than an hour the worthy merchant was on his way to London, and the next evening arrived at Maxdean.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON our hero's arrival at Audrey Hall, he gratified his uncle not a little by the warmth with which he expressed his indignation at the unworthy course of defence which his counsel had pursued on the recent trial.

"My dear Bernard," said Sir William, "you now speak like yourself. I trust the evil influence under which you laboured, is entirely at an end. Do not let the fellow's conduct annoy you. You are not to blame, and you have got well through your difficulty—the last of the kind, I hope."

Bernard had certain misgivings on that score; but forbore to mention them to Sir William, whose state of health appeared to have changed alarmingly during their brief separation. The

invalid, however, affected to make light of the subject, though he confessed he had been somewhat "fidgety" respecting the event of the trial, and probably rather more so in consequence of being obliged to remain in the house, owing to a troublesome cold and cough, which he believed he had taken by remaining out too late in the plantations.

When their own private affairs were dismissed, and Bernard had given an account of his interview with Mr. Storer, the unfortunate pugilistic butcher became the subject of conversation. The worthy knight highly approved of his nephew's humane conduct, in waiting the event of the fight at St. Alban's, and suggested that, as Andrews was likewise there, he should be commissioned to go and state the particulars to the poor fellow's wife, and furnish her with the means of going to him, if so disposed.

Now at the time this trusty messenger was despatched with the unwelcome news, Mrs. Burrows was entertaining 'company' at tea, and her company consisted of Timothy Higgins, the clerk, and an old woman, called Patty Pegg,

who usually paid for her entertainment by telling horrible stories of past times, and was supposed, by some wiseacres of the village, to know more than she ought. Deeply versed in the mystery of omens, she had been attentively studying the "grounds" of her hostess's tea-cup, till the patience of the latter was exhausted, and she requested to have it returned, observing that she had no faith in such nonsense.

"Well, Ma'am," said old Patty, "you will see; if something an't going to happen I'm not a living woman. Here's two men a fighting, as plain as ever I see'd anything in my life, and one of 'em's slipped down, and that's on your side. I don't know what to make of it, but it means summut, I'm sartain sure. Well—well, there's the cup."

The butcher's wife repeated her incredulity, and the old crone appealed to Timothy, who declared he had heard her say many strange things.

"Mind what I telled you consarning the great folks at the hall," said Patty. "You see as the heir an't got his lands yet, and the mar-

riage, as war to ha' been last year, never come to pass. You recollects the old rhymes as I telled you on?"

"Ay, ay," replied Timothy, making a sign for her to be silent, as he knew the bell-pulling story was a sore subject where they then were.

"Well, well," continued the old woman, "I knows what I knows, and take my word for it, some day the Audreys——"

"Hush," said the clerk, "here comes the young squire's gentleman!"

At the entrance of Andrews there was a great bustle; but he begged them to be seated, and said he wished to speak a few words with the mistress.

Sally Burrows instantly accompanied him into the shop, from whence she returned, in about five minutes, in great agitation, telling her guests that her husband had been fighting again, and got pretty near killed. "What I *shall* do, I'm sure I can't tell!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "What's to become of the children, if I go to him? And what's to become of him if I don't?"

“He will do very well without you,” said Andrews, who had followed her; “he can’t be in better hands. He has got a surgeon, and a physician too.”

“A physician!” shrieked poor Sally, “a physician! Then he *must* be bad indeed! Oh! let me go directly!”

“He’s quite out of all danger, I tell you,” exclaimed Andrews.

“No, no, no,” sobbed the wife, “I know better. Nobody *ever* has a *physician* till the *very last*.”

“More fools they, if they can afford it,” said the blunt valet.

“He’s no more occasion for you than he has for me; but, if you like to go, I’m to drive you to meet the coach, and pay your fare, and, if you want any money, master says you may have it.”

The poor woman’s resolution was instantly taken, provided she could find some one to take care of the children, and for that purpose she immediately repaired to Mrs. Semple. The gallant Mr. Timothy Higgins attended her, and

left Andrews and old Patty to entertain each other till their return.

The gossip immediately related the mystery of the tea-grounds, and was pleased to find she had an attentive hearer; for the valet had been, from his youth strongly tinted with superstitious credulity, and it was not a little increased by the nature of the secret with which he had latterly been entrusted.

Sir William's story of the Brahmin had often, since that time, been the subject of his cogitations; and when the witch-like old body repeated to him the lines, which foretold that

When the great bell tolls by unseen hands,
Then Audrey's heir shall lose his lands,

he absolutely turned pale.

"Where did you get that prophecy?" he asked.

"Ah," replied Patty, shaking her head and crossing her withered hands, "many is the long year as has gone by since I heard 'em first, and them as telled me be all dead and gone. It war a very very old woman as they called Peggy Sharp, one of the gipsy gangs, as used to

live about in the woods, but particular in Rockinghamshire, where they tell me there is a good many now, but nothing like what they was."

According to Andrews' idea, this was having prophecies from the fountain-head ; and so, as he had not been enjoined to secrecy relative to Sir William's story of the Brahmin, he ventured to ask his new old acquaintance if she could recollect any more rhymes concerning the family, and whether some of them did not mention something about the ear.

" Let me think," said the wily old crone ; " I be oldish now, and them things comes into one's head all of a sudden, when one 's alone, pertickly of nights. I'll try and remember 'em for you if they does, for you seems a sensible kind of gentleman, and not one of them as won't believe nothing but what they understands, no matter how plain whatsoever."

Andrews told her that he should feel very much obliged, and the old woman was highly delighted, not merely because she had gained another listener, but as she hoped by his

means to get admittance into the kitchen at the hall, an introduction of no small value to one in her circumstances and with her propensities.

The return of poor Sally Burrows now put an end to their conference, and as she had engaged a woman of the village to take charge of her house and the children during her absence, few other preparations were necessary.

“I shall be at the door with the gig in a quarter of an hour,” said Andrews as he left the house.

Old Patty gave a sort of triumphant glance at the tea equipage; but, in the bustle and hurry into which her hostess was suddenly thrown, did not venture any farther remark upon what she thought would answer her purpose better to talk about another day. She was, indeed, if not quite according to the vulgar, rustic acceptance of the term, yet certainly “a cunning woman;” and so she took her stick and moved herself off, with the determination of recollecting something whereby to mystify her new friend at the hall.

When Andrews had delivered Sally Burrows

into the charge of the London coachman, he returned home, and was immediately despatched to the public-house to tell the father of the unlucky pugilist all the particulars with which he was acquainted. Among the listeners there, he again found old Timothy, with whom, after executing his commission, he left the house, and seized the opportunity of their being alone to make inquiries respecting the old woman. The replies of the antient sexton, and the manner in which they were given, tended only to arouse his curiosity, and still more to excite his credulity; and that night poor Andrews' head was as completely occupied with old Patty Pegg as that of a lover with a new mistress.

On the following day, unable to restrain his impatience, he visited her miserable cottage, at the appearance of which, as well as that of the occupier, he was greatly shocked, not being aware that she had dressed, or rather undressed herself, and made other preparations for his reception. She was sitting, bent forward, on a low stool before a small wood fire on the naked hearth. Her only covering, as far as he could

perceive, was an old blanket, which was drawn over her head in the manner of a cowl, while her long, tangled, grey locks hung down on each side of her shrivelled countenance.

“ I *had* another stool,” said she, rising, “ but I was obliged to burn it in the winter, it was so cold. But, there, you take that, and I can sit upon the bed.”

The particulars of their conversation at this interview are not worth detailing, though the consequences were important to the cunning old woman, as Andrews made a representation of her deplorable condition to Sir William, and she was forthwith employed in weeding in the pleasure-grounds. To get a footing about the premises was her principal aim. Her forlorn and infirm appearance soon attracted the worthy knight’s attention, and he ordered that she should be supplied with a comfortable meal in the kitchen. Let it not, however, be supposed that she came to work in her old blanket ; on the contrary, her dress, though patched, and bearing evident marks of poverty, was always clean and tidy when out of doors. Having

once gained access to the kitchen, she soon became a favourite with the maid servants, whom she initiated into the mysteries of tea-cup grounds and so forth, and earned her share of the favourite beverage by tales of by-gone times, principally relating to the village, and those who had dwelt there, and thereabouts. To the latter, Andrews was usually an attentive listener; but he was somewhat mortified at not being able to extract any more family prophecies from his protégé. Whenever he urged her on that subject, she shook her head and said that such things were better forgotten, and that whatever was in the book of fate would come soon enough, and could not be prevented. Still, she always left an impression on the credulous valet's mind that she *could* tell something wonderful if she thought proper, and still he considered her to be a very extraordinary personage.

It has been already stated that Sir William's health had latterly declined. The change, indeed, had been so rapid as to excite the most anxious fears in Bernard's mind; and he fre-

quently endeavoured to persuade the invalid to go up to town for further advice. These efforts were at first taken kindly, but at length were resisted with something like peevishness.

“ I know my own complaint now,” said the invalid, “ as well as any of the doctors. I have been under their hands for years. It is always the same course—the same routine over and over again. Besides, London at this season of the year never agrees with me. So don’t say any more about it—I know you mean well—but it teases me.”

The fact was, that the worthy knight’s mind was now verging on a state of despair. He felt that he should not live long, and two letters which he had written to Mr. Storer had been answered in an unsatisfactory manner, particularly the last, which the merchant wrote at the time when his daughter at Brighton appeared to have recovered her spirits, and he had flattered himself, would soon get the better entirely of any lingering prepossession which she might yet feel towards our hero. This circumstance Sir William thought fit to

conceal from his nephew, judging that the prospect of being reconciled to Alicia must be the strongest incentive to induce him to persevere in his amended course of life. Besides, as Mr. Storer intended shortly to visit the country, he hoped that an interview might be attended with a favourable effect.

His lonely, melancholy walks were not unobserved by old Patty, as she crouched down at her work, concealed amid the trees of the shrubbery; and occasional exclamations which she had imperfectly overheard, led her to think that superstition and credulity at the hall were not confined to the kitchen. So she resolved the next time he accosted her, to do her best to attract the old gentleman's attention; and an opportunity soon presented itself, as he came one fine morning sauntering with his hands crossed behind him, and turning an abrupt bend in the walk, perceived her before him. She started up and dropped a profound curtsy.

“Well, my good woman,” said the knight, kindly, “I hope they take care of you? If

not, don't be afraid to let me know, as it is my wish that every body here should be comfortable."

"Thank your honour!—thank you, Sir William!" replied the old crone. "I never thought ever to be so well off agin. There's nothing as makes me uncomfortable but one thing—and that—I beg your honour's pardon——"

"Well, well, let me know what that is," said Sir William, "and if it can be amended, it shall."

"Ah! I wish it could! and, perhaps, it might," observed Patty, and then shaking her head as if to signify that the case was very doubtful, she continued. "But—no! You will think me too presumptuous."

"If it is any thing in reason," said Sir William, "speak out."

After a little more hesitation, the old woman told him that the only thing which made her uncomfortable was the state of his health, and declared that if he would but be persuaded to take a decoction of herbs, which she knew how to prepare, it would do him more good

than all the "doctor's stuff" in the world. The kind-hearted old knight was pleased at her solicitude in his behalf, and listened patiently to her account of divers wonderful cures which she said she had effected. He then gave her some money, thanked her for her good wishes, and walked away, telling her that he would think of what she had said. And he did think of it, as invalids are apt, when they hear of extraordinary cures performed by quacks or other irregular persons. "The human frame," he argued, "is the same both in rich and poor, and has been the same in all ages, during which remedies, now unknown or forgotten, or perhaps merely out of fashion, have been applied and succeeded in various complaints. The forms of medical practice are constantly changing: and what they are now pleased to call the 'perfection' of the science, will be probably deemed comparative ignorance in another century, while the human system will undergo no change."

While he was thus cogitating during the remainder of his walk, and leaning towards a

trial of the old woman's specific, she was earnestly engaged in strengthening her cause in the kitchen. There was no denying facts, she said, and she referred Andrews to several farmers' wives and various poor persons, who had derived benefit from her sovereign "dried herb tea."

The faithful servant was too much interested in his old master's welfare to neglect inquiry, and certainly heard some wonderful stories concerning the cure of various complaints, but more particularly of the ague and jaundice, with the latter of which he believed Sir William to be affected.

The consequence of his investigations was, that the valet became a powerful advocate for the ancient gatherer of simples, and that night, after repeating all that he had heard with the zeal and colouring usually given to novelty by a novice, he took the liberty of hinting to his master, that it would be little better than "flying in the face of Providence" to neglect the use of such simple means as now offered themselves.

Sir William replied that he would think the matter over coolly, and decide in the morning : and when the morning came, and Andrews still stuck to his point, the old woman was summoned and questioned relative to the composition of her wonderful specific. At first she affected mystery : but when Sir William told her plainly that he never took anything, not even from medical men, without first knowing what it was, she altered her tone, and named certain ingredients, from a vocabulary of which the patient had no knowledge, and was consequently as much in the dark as before.

To remedy this inconvenience, Mr. Semple, the village doctor, was next applied to as an interpreter,—a task which he easily fulfilled, having frequently employed poor Patty to collect plants for his own purposes. He moreover added, that no possible ill effects were to be apprehended from taking the said tea, though he shrugged his shoulders at the idea of its doing any good.

The result of all this was, that the old woman was ordered to her laboratory ; and while she

was busily occupied there, Sir William was as sedulously engaged in looking over an old herbal in the library. In this he found divers wonderful properties attributed to the herbs of which he was about to partake; and though he met with many things which were too ridiculous for belief, he fancied that there must have been some ground for other assertions. So, by the time his new beverage was ready, he was prepared to give it a trial, with a tolerable quantum of that credulous hope which such books are well calculated to inspire in the mind of a nervous and sinking invalid.

Whether from the latter cause, or that there really was something applicable to his complaints in the decoction, he fancied himself much benefited by it, and not only handsomely rewarded the old woman, but ordered that she should be provided with a room in the house, where she might prepare fresh supplies.

Bernard had little to say on this occasion. If his uncle was relieved, it could signify little to him by whom or by what means the relief was afforded: but he consoled himself more

by Mr. Semple's assurance that the new beverage could not do any more harm than by indulging sanguine hopes of a beneficial result.

Old Patty now became a person of consequence at the hall, and of course in the village, where those who had formerly thought it charity to ask her to take a cup of tea, considered a call for that purpose as something bordering upon condescension. Among the rest, poor Sally Burrows was particularly attentive. She had brought back her unlucky husband in a very weakly state: but happily for himself and family, as Sir William foretold, "the conceit was taken out of him."

George appeared now as anxious and attentive to his business as ever, though unable to go to work with his wonted strength and alacrity. Old Patty's "herb tea" was indicated as the best thing he could take under such circumstances, and though he at first made wry faces about it, he soon brought himself to think it as good as any other. At all events, the copious exhibition itself, prescribed in his case by the female Paracelsus, prevented him from feeling

that inordinate thirst which had latterly driven him too frequently to the public-house.

Bernard had several consultations with his uncle about the poor fellow, who, it turned out, had backed himself in the late fight with all the ready money he could raise, and was consequently now experiencing some of his former difficulties. Our hero wished to have paid his losses, but Sir William decidedly objected, and their assistance was limited to paying weekly for all the meat brought to the hall, and privately giving the neighbouring farmers to understand that they would be responsible for anything which he might purchase of them. This latter commission was intrusted to Mr. Semple: and thus the poor butcher was restored to credit, and the suspicion of his being linked with body-snatchers having been removed by a former explanation, he appeared to be in a fair way of doing well.

Bernard kept a strict watch upon the man's conduct, and became every day more convinced of the truth of his uncle's observation, that "where a large amount might produce evil,

trifling assistance, judiciously administered, may effect permanent benefit."

The reformation of this one victim to his invisible follies, afforded him great satisfaction: but still his thoughts were seldom long absent from Alicia.

Such was the state of things at Audrey, when Mr. Storer arrived at Maxdean Hall.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SIR WILLIAM had allowed his mind to dwell so intently on the importance of his next interview with Mr. Storer, as to be much agitated when they met. The worthy merchant was shocked equally with his altered, tremulous manner, as by the change in his appearance, and, combining these with what Miss Read had told him at Brighton, began to fancy that our hero had again started on a fresh invisible career.

After a little preliminary conversation, and when his first emotion was somewhat abated, Sir William said, "I have been most anxious to see you, my dear sir ; and now you are come, I hope you will treat me with your usual frankness and sincerity. A knowledge even of the worst, is better to be endured than suspense.

Tell me, I entreat you—tell me candidly—is there any hope for poor Bernard?”

Had Mr. Storer not been previously aware, he would now have seen that the question asked was one of almost vital importance to the invalid, and he could not bear the idea of destroying a hope, the abandonment of which would certainly embitter, and might probably shorten the poor old gentleman's brief period of existence; he, therefore, affected a gay tone, and replied, “Hope!—always hope, Sir William—faint heart never won fair lady. Not married yet—never give up till then—nobody after her neither.”

“From what I saw of the young lady,” observed Sir William, gravely, “I should judge that she was not fickle in her attachments.”

“Quite contrary,” exclaimed Mr. Storer; “firm friend—she and Charlotte and little Emmy, always together. Firm friend—good daughter, good wife, eh?”

“Not a doubt of it,” said the knight. “I will hope, then, that she cannot forget my, unfortunately, temporarily misguided nephew.”

“No, no, no,” replied the merchant; “no danger of that. Can’t forget him if she would — always something to put her in mind of him. Thought t’other day he was following her—in the old way. Felt him touch her—terribly frightened, of course. No use to mince the matter—ice once broken—that’s what brought me here in such a hurry. Forfeit his word—all up. Can’t believe it, though—old un’s got him again for good and all if he has—don’t believe it, though. Very much pleased with him when told me about old Close Hawker and his son. Chip of old block that—catch it by and by—both of ’em.”

Sir William stated that his nephew had not been absent from the hall a single day since he returned from London, and that consequently he could not have been accessory to any circumstance by which Miss Storer might have been alarmed. “His conduct,” continued the knight, “has been in every respect consistent with his former character,” and then he related our hero’s behaviour in the affairs of poor Burrows.

The merchant expressed his satisfaction, and

hoped that all would continue to go on well ; but parried several attempts which the knight made to turn the conversation directly upon the subject of his daughter. His manner perplexed and alarmed Sir William, who at length said, in a melancholy tone,

“ I fear that your own prejudices, my good sir, are not yet removed respecting the young man. I could have wished that they should have had an interview. I cannot last long — and to see him settled before I die, is the only wish I have.”

“ Hope you ’ll live to see ’em both settled and happy,” said Mr. Storer. “ Don’t see why not. Mustn’t give way — keep up your spirits. Ally ’s not well enough now — sea-bathing and all that. No reason why shouldn’t meet another day, though. Soon get better, dare say — let you know, depend upon’t.”

This sort of indefinite way of expressing himself was so much out of the straightforward merchant’s usual line, that he felt greatly relieved by the entrance of a very singular third person. This was no other than old Patty

Pegg, who, for the last few days, had regularly delivered her fresh preparations in person, and made professional inquiries respecting her patient's health. It was so uncommon for Sir William to have any visitors, that she appeared quite astonished at the sight of another person, and stood still, with a china-jug in her hand, gazing alternately at both the gentlemen.

“Very well, my good Patty,” said Sir William. “Set it down, and I will help myself presently.”

But Patty was not so easily to be dismissed. Encouraged by the familiarity with which she had been hitherto treated, and anxious to display her importance before a stranger, she would not leave the room till she had asked certain not very delicate questions of her patient, and received a somewhat tarter reply than usual.

“Eh, what?—keep a witch, Sir William?” asked Mr. Storer, the moment the door was closed. “Don’t wonder got the blue-devils again. Won’t do—this. Give up to old women, all over. What’s this?” and smelling the

jug, he continued, "Ugh! stinks! Poison yourself—throw it away. Chip in porridge. Glass of old madeira do you most good."

"We will try that at dinner," said the invalid, smiling faintly; "I assure you, however, that I have fancied myself much better since I have taken that beverage."

"Eh!—fancy sure enough," observed Mr. Storer. "All humbug—stuff—wash your inside out. Canting old hussy! Get rid of her—see what she is. Had one of same sort in my house once—pretty near killed my wife—would quite, if had stayed all her confinement. Tell what she is with half an eye. Long stories—omens—head-shaking—mystery—hobgoblins—winding-sheets in candle—coffins hopping out of fire—thinks knows more than all doctors. Pack her off! drive you mad else. See now what's the matter with you.—Nothing else. Worse than the Brahmin this—everlasting croaking. Doesn't sit up with you at nights, hope?"

It was not merely because he had a new subject of conversation, that the merchant conti-

nued to denounce the old woman and her drink. He had ever been a most inveterate enemy to quacks and quackery of every description, and really looked upon the admission of such a person as old Patty into the household as a most dangerous symptom in the case of his poor friend. Sir William heard him as though he heard him not, attributing what was said to the vague ebullitions of prejudice against simple remedies.

In the mean while, Bernard was seen riding slowly toward the house, and his appearance prevented the renewal of the conversation which had been so abruptly broken off.

From the cordial manner in which Mr. Storer saluted our hero, Sir William derived more comfort than from what had previously passed. This was the merchant's intention, and a continuance of the same friendly affability was the only ground for hope which the invalid could extract from his visiter, during his brief stay on that occasion.

"Must excuse my going early," said the merchant, soon after dinner. "Got to write

home — wife always fidgety, when take a journey, till hears I'm come safe to hand. See you again 'fore I go, though—stop a week, dare say. Got the bricklayers and carpenters again—work at hot-houses. Good mind to pull 'em down. Ride over, Bernard? — glad to see you — five o'clock. You too, Sir William, if old witch let you come — wish she was drowned in her own mess."

In consequence, probably, of the mental agitation which he had suffered during the day, Sir William was so unwell that night, as to render it proper for some one to sit up with him; and unfortunately, his confidence in old Patty had now reached such an extent, that he selected her for that purpose.

It was midnight, and he lay dozing with his eyes shut. His imagination wandered vaguely over the strange causes by which his well-founded plans for restoring the family dignity had been thwarted, threatened, and even *now* might be eventually destroyed. It has been already said that he was given to superstition; and that a mind exhibiting great

strength on other subjects, may be weakly credulous on that one, is no new remark. The Brahmin and the strange individual who had caused his nephew's downfall, appeared to be flitting before him, sometimes separately, and then as if mingling into one and the same figure. He was tracing their movements, and perhaps in another second might have fallen asleep and lost sight of them, when he was aroused by feeling something moving about his head.

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed, and opening his eyes he perceived that his nurse was leaning over him, and busying herself about his night-cap, which had slipped somewhat aside. "My good woman," said he, wearily, "do let me alone. I was just falling asleep."

"I could not sit by," she replied, in a mysterious tone, "and see you fall asleep in that state. Your left ear was exposed."

These words effectually roused the poor old gentleman, and he lay for some time gazing on the person who had uttered them. The more

he gazed, the more he became struck with her appearance, for (with the exception of a clean, for a dirty blanket,) the old crone had on this occasion shrouded herself after the same fashion as when she received Andrews' first visit at her cottage. In the dim light between his curtains, the invalid seemed doubtful of her identity, and asked in a tremulous accent, "Is that *you*, Patty?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied, "don't disturb yourself. You may go to sleep *now* in *safety*."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Sir William.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," replied the old hag, and she glided back, and took her seat in the large arm chair by his bedside.

The invalid continued silent for some minutes, endeavouring to ascertain if what he fancied he had heard respecting the exposure of his ear, was not in reality a part of his dozing reverie. At length, being convinced to the contrary, he summoned his witch-like attendant, and demanded an explanation. The only reply he could at first obtain was, that she meant no-

thing particular, and only thought he might take cold. The manner however in which this was said was intended, and served to excite her patient's curiosity ; and when he insisted upon a direct reply, she, after some farther hesitation, and with great apparent reluctance, confessed that she was thinking of an old prophecy in rhymes, which she could not recollect, but the substance of which was, that the Audreys should look well to their ears.

“ It is very strange that I never heard this before,” said Sir William, musing.

“ Ah, Sir,” observed the old crone, “ they was telled to me, long afore you was born, and by them as I’m afeard was no better than they should be, for they do say as them old gipsy women knows more than they ought, though I never knew no harm in pertickler of old Peggy Sharp, who said she heard the rhymes when she was a girl ; and I was a girl and she an old woman, older nor I be now, when she telled me on ’em. But, very like, it’s all a pack o’nonsense. So, do go to sleep, that’s a good gentleman. It’ll do you good.”

The miserable old creature could not have baited her hook better. An old family legend was precisely the thing to catch the attention of a mind constituted like that of Sir William's, at any time ; but coming in corroboration of the Brahmin's warning and the late adventures of his nephew, its influence was excessive.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the whole was an invention of old Patty's, grounded upon the question once asked of her by Andrews. She had found by experience, that few things excited such general attention as old prophecies, even among those who affected to despise and ridicule them, and many a good dinner had she gained by such inventions.

The present "humbug" (as Mr. Storer would have called it) was reserved for the knight himself, as her purposes were already answered with Andrews. Greatly did she plume herself upon the avidity with which her patient listened to her, and the importance which he appeared to attach to the subject.

As she afterwards sate by the fire, she could not avoid muttering, "This is your eddication !

Why, he took it all in at once like a child. I didn't think to ha' had such easy work—but, 'once a man and twice a child,' they say. I shan't be afeard o' nothing a'ter this."

Sir William, of course, passed an unquiet night, and found himself too unwell in the morning to think of going to Maxdean; but urged his nephew not to neglect the invitation which he had received. And Bernard went accordingly, and during his ride became absorbed in a variety of very disagreeable reflections and apprehensions. The unlucky young gentleman was indeed getting into a very low way, for which he probably had more reasons than can usually be pleaded by persons who give way to blue bedevilments. Moreover, the monotonous life which he had latterly led with his uncle was little calculated to benefit him.

We have been told, (and, having had no personal experience in that line, are obliged to take the fact upon hearsay) that a month at the treadmill gives men a peculiar style of walking. Even so our hero's style of thinking, riding, perambulating, and general gait and appearance, were

changed; and a stranger to his recent invisible difficulties would scarcely have recognised the once gay, handsome, dashing young heir of Audrey, in the negligent, listless, downcast, moping, pale-faced being, who now came slowly winding his way along the sweep that led to Maxdean Hall.

Instead of jumping off his horse, and running into the house, as formerly, he tingled the bell, as a beggar might have done; and on the appearance of a servant, timidly inquired if Mr. Storer was within, and handed his card, as if presenting a petition.

The merchant received him in the most friendly manner; but said he should have no time to talk to him till dinner, being completely occupied with his work-people, who were sure to do wrong if he was out of the way for a minute.

So Bernard was left to himself and his cogitations, and began to stroll about the well-known grounds in no very enviable frame of mind.

“Oh! how different!” he exclaimed, “how *widely* different is my *present* state of mind, to that in which I crossed this lawn on the fatal

day when I gave utterance to my foolish wish ! There was *then* nothing which man ought to desire with which I was not blessed—and *now* scarcely hope remains !”

Full of such gloomy reflections, he continued his walk, and at length entered the too-well-remembered arbour, with as little idea that anything extraordinary was about to happen, as on the former occasion.

“ Oh !” said he, throwing himself upon the fatal seat, on which he had suffered anointment at the hands of the indistinct-looking, pale-faced elderly gentleman—“ oh, that wishing to be deprived of my miserable gift, could be attended with the same result as my former folly ! Then I might regain the lost affections of Alicia, and the confidence of friends.”

He had repeated something of the same sort several times, when he was much surprised to see a stranger coming up the walk which led to the bower. “ Who can he be ?” thought Bernard ; “ one of Mr. Storer’s tenants, perhaps. No, he is too well dressed.

The man continued to advance, and pre-

sented, on a nearer approach, a perfect picture of robust health, strength, and content. He was apparently about forty years of age, was clad in a blue frock coat, with yellow buttons, red waistcoat, buff leather nether garments, and gaiters, and carried a stout walking-stick, which he flourished gaily, as if to keep time with a merry air that he was alternately whistling and caroling, and of which Bernard caught the following words, sung with more strength of lungs than harmony.

So—sticking to upright and downright,
 With a conscience where nothing goes wrong,
 That's the way I sleep soundly by night,
 And the days—oh ! they're never too long !
Tol de rol, de lol, lira li da.
 I bid all foolish wishes go hang !
 When they're granted they prove but a snare.

Here he broke off at the moment he was entering the harbour, apparently much surprised and somewhat confused at finding it occupied.

“ I beg your pardon, sir,” said he, “ I had no idea that any one was here.”

“ You don't disturb me,” replied our hero.

“It is a pleasure to me to see one who appears to be so truly happy.” And as he looked at the ruddy countenance, good-humoured smile, and sparkling eyes of his new acquaintance, he could not help making a comparison between him and himself.

“Yes, sir,” said the stranger, “I have nothing to complain of now, but I have had my troubles, I can tell you. However, they were of my own seeking, and so I’ve no right to grumble.”

“I am afraid that is the case too generally,” said our hero. “I am sure, however, that it has been mine.”

“I should not have supposed, sir,” observed the sturdy stranger, with an expression of commiseration on his glowing features, “I could not have imagined that *you* had *any* troubles.”

“You know me then?” inquired Bernard.

“Yes, sir,” replied the yeoman, with a serious air, “I do; and I very much fear that I have injured you.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed our hero. “You are an utter stranger to me! I am sure I

should have recollected you if I had ever seen you before."

The only reply was a faint smile, after which the stranger crossed his brawny arms, and appeared lost in a reverie.

"You are under some mistake, sir," resumed Bernard. "You take me for another person."

"Oh, no!" said the yeoman; "I have been the means of injuring you, and from your altered appearance, I fear deeply. But I had no idea of the consequences to you, that I must say in defence of myself, if indeed I acted wrong, which I can scarcely acknowledge, considering all the circumstances of the case. I thought certainly too — at least I hoped that a person in your station of life might have escaped. But, however, it is in my power to make you some sort of amends, and that I will do with all my heart."

"All this is perfectly incomprehensible to me," observed our hero. "How, and when can you possibly have injured me, when we never met before?"

“ We have met before,” said the stranger ; “ I can easily convince you of that fact. But —you must first promise me, on your honour, that you will listen patiently to what I have to tell you. Not that I have any thing to fear from your violence ; but for your own sake, I require this of you. Whatever I may have formerly seemed, and you may still imagine me to be, I am now here as your friend : and no one else has the power of serving you so effectually.”

Bernard thought all this very extraordinary, but moved, as he afterwards said, merely by feelings of curiosity, he promised to listen to all that might be told him, with entire patience, and not to attempt any violence. The latter, indeed, whatever provocation he might receive, appeared perfectly ridiculous against so formidable an opponent. The stranger then commenced in a manner sufficiently startling.

“ Your troubles, Mr. Audrey, if I am not greatly mistaken, commenced in consequence of something that occurred in this very place where we are now sitting. If not—if they

proceed from any other cause—it is useless for me to go on, as in that case I can do nothing for you.”

“ They do !—they do !” gasped Bernard. “ Tell me ! I conjure you ! Is it possible ?” and he seized the arm of the stranger, who put him aside as calmly and easily as though he had been a child, and reminded him of his promise to be patient and tranquil. “ How could you possibly know of that transaction ?” exclaimed Bernard.

“ I told you before,” replied the stranger, “ that we had met, and our meeting was on this identical spot.”

“ You ! you !” ejaculated Bernard. “ You and I ! No—never. The person whom I met here was as different from you as light from darkness !”

“ Nevertheless,” observed the stranger. “ that person was the same individual who now speaks to you. I was formerly much as you see me now, only younger. I was hale and hearty ; had a snug farm of my own left me by my father ; and might, and ought, and should have

been happy as a prince, but for a foolish wish which came into my head one day, when I was out shooting rabbits—I need not tell you what it was—but it was granted—and the long and the short of the business is, it brought me into scrape after scrape, and trouble after trouble, till nobody would keep company with me. I lost my character and was glad to sell my farm, and go wandering about, anywhere where I wasn't known.

“ Well — there was only one chance of getting rid of the cause of my troubles, and that was a very poor one for me, though I hope it may serve your turn better, as you shall have the advantage of my experience. I was told when I received the gift, that whenever I could find any one, who, without invitation or persuasion on my part, uttered the same foolish wish as my own, I might transfer it to him and if he used it, I should get rid of it myself after nine times nine days. Well—I wandered about, and went among the poorest and most miserable wretches I could find, hoping some of them would answer my purpose ; but I never

heard the wish uttered more than twice — once by a fellow in the pillory, and the second time by a thief who had escaped from prison. So — there I was, character and all gone, roaming about, till at last I gave up hope, and took to fretting, and so got ill, and fell away, till I became in the state you saw me.

“ I dare say I should soon have died ; but one day I went into a church, and the sermon was about foolish wishes. The clergyman said that the persons most subject to give way to them, were generally those who possessed all that they ought to desire. Well — I knew by my own case that there was some truth in his observation, so I took heart again, and thinking great people must be meant, I went to London, and, as I told you at our first interview, made my way even into the presence of Majesty itself; but no such foolish wish did I ever hear uttered, though I must say I heard a great many almost as ridiculous among lords and ladies and fashionable people.

“ Well — I went wandering about again into the country, in the same way as I suppose Cain

did, feeling as if there was a mark upon me ; and I do sometimes believe there was something shocking in my looks, for everybody seemed to shun me, and that drove me often to become invisible ; but almost every time I did so, some mischief was sure to come of it, no matter how innocent my intentions. At last I came into this neighbourhood, and heard everybody speak of you, and say that you really had nothing left to wish for.

“ It was a sort of forlorn hope that I felt, but I thought I would see you ; and you may imagine my joy when I heard you utter the wished-for sounds. I was then standing close by you, outside the arbour, and retired to a short distance in order to make my appearance. I need not repeat what followed. The boxes of ointment may be of any kind you please, as it is your hand which gives them the power. If I had been allowed time to think, I do not believe I should have withstood the temptation of getting rid of my pernicious gift ; but I really did not see how it could do you any harm, particularly as I saw how innocently you first used it.

My first trial was shooting a poor old woman, who has been a cripple ever since. I left you in the middle of your game, well pleased with myself and you, and have never been in the neighbourhood since till to-day, when I thought I would come and look at the lucky place, under pretence of seeing the grounds, which Mr. Storer permits to strangers. Perhaps you will think that, in strict justice, I ought to take back my gift again, but that is impossible, as the person on whom alone you will have the power of bestowing it, must really wish to have it, and that I never can."

A long pause succeeded this singular story. Bernard sate, with his head on his hand, endeavouring to think, but his ideas were strangely confused, and he could scarcely believe that he had not fallen asleep, and must be dreaming. He was at length aroused by the stranger, who said,

"Come, sir, cheer up! You see there's a way out of the wood. There are as great fools in the world as ever you and I have been, and I don't see why you shouldn't find one of them.

Don't bear malice against me, at any rate. If you had been in my place, you would have done just as I did, I am sure."

"Yes," exclaimed Bernard, "I most certainly should. I cannot — I do not blame you. I have no one to blame but myself. But you said just now, that you would be my friend. I thank you for what you have told me, and sincerely forgive you for having been the cause of my misery. You can, however, be of still greater service to me. Will you assist me?"

"There's my hand," said the stranger, frankly. "As far as a plain, honest yeoman can, so far will I go; but mind — all must be upright and downright — no mystification — or I'm off."

"You have nothing to fear on that head," replied our hero. "All I wish is that you will suffer me to introduce you to Mr. Storer, and that you will repeat to him what you have just told me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

BUSY as Mr. Storer was among his work men, he found time to listen to the stranger's tale ; and, after making a few brief comments upon it, he invited the narrator to stop and dine where he was.

“With all my heart,” replied the yeoman, “though, to tell you the truth, I have dined once already. One o'clock is my hour ; but I've been riding and walking since, and dare say I shall be able to pick a bit.”

His capacity in the “picking” line was made tolerably evident at dinner-time. Plate after plate of solid roast beef did he devour, and washed it down with frequent and copious draughts of the merchant's home-brewed, praising both, and, altogether, making himself quite at home.

“Glad to see you enjoy yourself,” said Mr. Storer.

“Thank you, Sir,” replied the stranger. “Always do now. Nothing comes amiss. I take things as I find them, and am content—and ‘contentment is wealth,’ sir;” and he began singing,

No vain wish confounding him,
All his joys surrounding him.
Dear to him his wife, his home,
His honour and his friend.*

“Married, eh?” asked Mr. Storer. “Got a wife, eh, farmer?”

“Yes,” replied the stranger, “and a good one too. One of the right sort. I soon got married after I got rid of you know what. She wouldn’t have me before, though she liked me too well to have anybody else.”

“Got any children?” inquired his host.

“Whew!” replied the stranger. “Think of the time! all in a fair way though, and perhaps may have quite enough of them yet; for my old girl is only six-and-twenty, and I am not

* The Model.—A song.

quite thirty, though I look somewhat older yet : but I get younger every day."

The gleam of hope which had so suddenly broke in upon our unlucky hero, and the merriment of his two companions, together, perhaps, with the influence of good cheer, and a few glasses of old madeira, roused his spirits sufficiently to enable him to take a part in the conversation after the cloth was drawn.

"What wine do you take, sir," said Mr. Storer to his new guest.

"Port, Sir, when I take wine at all," was the reply ; "but John Barleycorn is the fellow for me. He sticks by the ribs, Sir, and I am not yet quite what I once was : but 'Rome was not built in a day,' as we used to say at school. I shall pick up my crumbs by and by, though, I've no doubt. So, here's your good health, sir, and your's, Mr. Audrey, hoping you'll get out of the hobble as well as I've done, and get as good a wife."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Storer, "here's your good health, Mr.—Haven't the pleasure of knowing your name though."

“Call me John Bull, sir,” replied the stranger; “that’s what they’ve christened me in the place where I’m settled, and it’s the name I mean to stick by.”

“Can’t have a better,” said the merchant; “so, John, here’s your good health! May you live long and die fat—eh?”

“One of the most extraordinary things,” observed Bernard, “in all this strange affair, is, that I have not the smallest recollection of any one feature in your countenance, and you formerly appeared to me at least sixty years of age.”

“Ay, and I felt so,” said the yeoman, “and, as for my countenance, I really believe I got a shade lighter, and my features became less distinct, every time I practised my secret. If I had kept it much longer, hang me if I think a looking-glass would have been of any sort of use, and perhaps, at last, I might have become invisible, for good and all, altogether.”*

* “These things,” to use old John Bunyan’s phrase, “are a similitude.” Every time a man practises mystification and deceit, he loses somewhat of the former features and complex-

“Pretty mess had been in then !” exclaimed Mr. Storer. “Think I see you—No—forgot—couldn’t have seen you—Distinct enough now, however. No danger o’ not recollecting your features this time.”

“No,” replied the yeoman, “I am getting back to something like what I once was. A few more months of quiet days and sound nights, a few more pounds of roast beef and plum-pudding, and I wouldn’t thank the king to be my uncle.”

“Must see what you can do for my young friend here,” said Mr. Storer. “Experience great thing in all cases. Help him if you can, eh ?”

“Willingly,” replied the stranger, “if I only knew how. The only way is to look sharp after those who are best off.”

ion of his mind. In other words, after each repetition, his character grows less and less distinct, until, at length it is but a shadow, and then entirely lost sight of. To follow up the allegory, the looking-glass may be called reflection, which presents but a cloudy and indistinct image of themselves to such men. But, we are not writing a sermon, and so leave the rest of our morality for the discerning reader to discover.

“I’ve hit it!” exclaimed the merchant; “make a round sum by it too. Put it up to auction. Fools enough in London to buy any thing.”

“No, sir,” observed Bernard gravely, “that will not do. There must be no solicitation nor persuasion.”

“Humph!” said the merchant; “try again, won’t give it up—Find you somebody, hope.”

“I have one very particular favour to ask of you, sir,” said Bernard, addressing his new old acquaintance. “I trust you will not refuse to go with me on my return home, that I may introduce you to my uncle. He has always had some unpleasant doubts upon his mind relative to the character of the person from whom I received my unfortunate gift.”

“Thought you were the old gentleman himself,” said Mr. Storer; “so did I too—confess it. Couldn’t help it. Don’t look much like him now, though.”

“I believe he’s at the bottom of all such doings,” observed the yeoman; “but I got the secret from a poor wretch who had been wan-

dering about, just as I did afterwards. A shocking plight he was in, and I took him home and gave him something to eat and drink, and a night's lodging, and never saw him since."

"Come, fill your glass, and tell us how it was," said Mr. Storer.

"With all my heart," replied the yeoman: "I remember laughing at what had happened at the time, for I was in high spirits—but they soon left me afterward. You must know that I was an only son, and, having lost my parents when young, I came into possession of a good freehold farm, which had been let for five hundred a year till I was of age; and then, as I liked a farmer's life and was fond of sporting, I took it into my own hands. Well, I was somebody in that line of life, and didn't think small-beer of myself, I can tell you: and so all went on well for some time, and I got a sweetheart, the same that I am married to now, God bless her! But, if I begin talking about her, I shall never get to the end of my story. Well, I had far too many rabbits on

my land, and used to be very fond of going out to shoot them; and one fine summer's evening was at the sport, when I heard a terrible outcry in the road that went by one of my small woods. So I ran to see what was the matter, and found three Irishmen labouring a poor wretch that looked like a Jew, who, as they said, had come upon them invisible. I could make neither head nor tail of their story, nor of that of the man himself; but I got him out of their hands, and sent him into the house to get something to eat, and then went shooting rabbits again: but I hadn't much luck, as they were so shy and quick-sighted, that I couldn't get near enough. So I went back home, and met the Jew, as I supposed him to be by his beard, in the yard; and, for want of something better to do, began talking to him.

“‘What's this nonsense about your being invisible, Moses?’ says I; and when he made no answer but only shook his head, I added, ‘It would be no bad thing that. I wish I was invisible;’ for I couldn't help thinking how nicely I could pop off the rabbits.

Upon that he looked at me very earnestly, as if doubting my word ; and I, pleased with the foolish notion that I had taken into my head, said, ‘ Yes, indeed, Moses, I really do wish I could be invisible.’ And then he eyed me with a look which was utterly incomprehensible at the time, and only served to amuse me and make me repeat the ridiculous wish, till I had said it often enough to answer his purpose ; and you may guess the rest. Never was mortal man so pleased as I was at first after my anointing ; but he took pretty good care to take himself out of the way before any harm came of it.”

“ What had he been doing with the Irishmen ?” asked Mr. Storer.

“ Oh ! I had almost forgotten that,” said the yeoman. “ One’s own concerns always run away with one. I got the story partly from him, and partly from them, and will tell you exactly how it was. There were two of them sitting by the road-side, and, as they were roguish chaps, he thought he had better pass them unseen, and so pulled his ear, and was

going by, when one of them started up and ran against him. Seeing nothing, but feeling that he had got hold of a man, the fellow, who had been drinking a little, kept fast hold, and being much the stronger of the two, a very unequal sort of scuffle took place.

“ ‘What’s the matter wid ye now, twisting about in that way?’ cried his companion.

“ ‘Can’t ye see nothing but me?’ said the first.

“ ‘Not I,’ was the answer, ‘there’s nothing but yourself making a fool of yourself, and there’s no need for that any-how.’

“ ‘It can’t be nothing!’ roared the first.

“ ‘If it an’t nothing,’ said his comrade, ‘it’s as much like nothing as one thing can be like another.’

“ ‘Now—come dis way and see yirself, Teddy,’ cried the other.

“ So Teddy stepped forward, and feeling a man, but seeing nothing, bawled out,

“ ‘Och hone! Dermot! here’s a pretty thing has come to my mother’s son! what will I do? I’m struck stone blind, for I can’t see

anything but you, and have got hould of somebody into the bargain.'

" 'No,' cried Dermot, 'you don't look a bit as if you were blind. It's me that has lost my precious eye-sight, sure enough.'

" Well—the poor fellow hadn't spoken a word as long as he was held only by one man, because he was in hopes of slipping away ; but when two held him fast, he gave up that idea ; and, finding they were Irishmen, told them to let him go, for he was St. Patrick in disguise, going upon a special errand. The men, however, wouldn't release him till he'd given them back their eye-sight ; and so he was obliged to make himself visible : and when they saw a man with a long beard, it seemed as though they really at first believed what he said, and having, as I mentioned before, been drinking a little, they took courage to ask him some questions about their friends in Ireland. Well, as ill luck would have it, he took it into his head to revenge himself for his fright by telling them that several of their relations had got into trouble by sheep-stealing, rioting, and so on ;

and all bade fair to turn out a very good joke, when a third Irishman came up, who was not so easily to be gammoned. He took great exceptions to the shabby representative of St. Patrick, who he swore 'was a gentleman born and bred, and any-how wasn't a Jew.'

" ' You had better take care what you say,' said my anointer. ' Woe to them that offend the saints !'

" ' Take your head off then,' replied the third Irishman, ' and walk about with it under your arm, and I 'll believe you.'

" ' Ay, ay,' cried the others, ' Terry's right ! That's the way the raal St. Patrick wears his head, sure enough.'

" Well, as he couldn't perform that feat, the poor man was about to pull his left ear, when Terry caught hold of him, swearing that he was no other than the wandering Jew ; and his companions, catching at the idea, vowed vengeance against him for the lies he had told them about their relations, as well as for the old grudge which they owed him as good Christians. So they set to work and began belabour-

ing him in a manner which would probably soon have put an end to his invisible troubles if I had not run to his assistance; for as they thought it was impossible to kill him, they were not at all particular where they struck. I don't think I should have been able to rescue him if I had not had some harvest-work coming on, and they hoped to be employed."

The yeoman afterwards related several of his own invisible adventures, almost all of which, as in Bernard's case, had been productive of evil to himself or others. Mr. Storer, who while listening had made somewhat free with the bottle, appeared highly delighted with his new guest, and insisted on his taking a bed at Maxdean, in which case he promised to ride over with him in the morning to Audley Hall.

"With all my heart," replied the yeoman "I told my old woman I should not be back for three days, and this is but the first. I wanted somehow to look at the lucky place; and right glad I am that I came, as my visit may be of service to Mr. Audrey. Things don't turn out now as they used to do. Al-

most every thing I take in hand goes right, and I'm pretty certain that what I've told him will be the means of helping him through."

The worthy merchant invited Bernard likewise to sleep where he was, but he felt too anxious to return to Audrey Hall, in order to communicate what he had learnt to his uncle.

A very different pace was that with which our hero returned, to the funeral-like movements of the morning; and as he was borne along rapidly through the cool night-air, he sometimes caught himself humming a stave or two of the yeoman's ditties.

Though Sir William was in bed on his arrival, and the old woman croaked a good deal about her master being disturbed, Bernard peremptorily ordered her out of the room; and then sitting down by the invalid, related the adventures of the day.

"You will see the man himself to-morrow," said he in conclusion. "He has agreed to come over with Mr. Storer, and tell you every particular."

Sir William felt extremely gratified by what he heard, as well as by the solicitude which his nephew evinced to relieve his mind.

“My dear Bernard,” said he, squeezing his hand affectionately, “I will now confess, that even since our reconciliation, I have sometimes wronged you occasionally. I could not, in spite of all your assertions, bring myself thoroughly to believe that there had not been some fearful and infernal compact in this affair. I see now that your fall was occasioned, like that of many others, by giving way to a fanciful, foolish dream, which you vainly imagined would increase your happiness. The means were unfortunately given you to make the trial, and perhaps nothing but experience would have convinced you of the impossibility of being really happy while pursuing a course founded on concealment and deceit. That course is now happily at an end. There remains but one thing to ensure you, to make you perfectly safe, and that is, to remove from you every temptation to a relapse. I think that, in that respect, I see our way clearly ; but you know it is

my rule never to do any act of importance without some quiet previous reflection. I shall therefore adhere to this good old custom, even in the present instance, notwithstanding that I feel firmly convinced no change will thereby be wrought in my mind."

Bernard knew his uncle too well to press him for an opinion upon a subject on which he had not reflected and finally decided; and shortly after they parted for the night, the one to think over his plan, and the other marvelling much what it could possibly be.

"He would not express himself in that sanguine manner without good reasons," thought our hero, as he laid his head upon his pillow. "My uncle's failing, if I may be allowed to use such a term, is that of being too doubtful. I never remember hearing him speak so positively before about any thing that he had not well considered. What can he mean by saying that he sees our way clearly? To me it is any thing but clear; and I am sure I have thought enough about the matter."

So he went on puzzling himself, making a

variety of guesses, but none at all like the truth, till he fell asleep ; and then he began to dream about Alicia, in a style not altogether unpleasant, though odd figures, which he would rather had been absent, now and then took the liberty of intruding themselves.

Sir William had latterly breakfasted in his own room ; but, on the following morning, he made his appearance at the usual hour below, and during the social meal evinced an unusual degree of vivacity, and even of gaiety.

“ My dear fellow,” said he to his nephew, “ you may consider your invisible troubles at an end. I have digested, fixed, settled my plan ; but you must excuse me for not letting you into the secret till I have spoken on the subject with Mr. Storer, and all is ripe for action. Set your mind at ease though ; it can’t fail of answering every purpose. Don’t attribute my apparent want of confidence to any unkind feelings towards you. No supposition can be more erroneous. The fact is, that I fear you might, with the best intentions, and I know you would have no other—you might be the cause of some

obstacle to my plan, were I to reveal it to you before all is ready. When I have brought all my forces into the field, I am sure you will see your way clear enough. In the mean while you must leave all to me, and remain content without asking any questions."

"Whatever your plan may be, my dear uncle," said Bernard, "I have such confidence in your experience and judgment, that without inquiring any particulars, I promise you I will follow it to the very letter of your instructions; that is, if its execution depend at all upon me."

"Of course it must, in some degree," observed the Knight smiling. "Remember, I did not exact this promise; it was given voluntarily. You will please, however, not to forget it, in case you should make any little objections, and I should find it necessary to urge its fulfilment."

"You may rely on me, sir," replied our hero. "I will perform it to the very letter, as I said before."

"Very well," added Sir William. "Have

the kindness to cut me another slice of ham. I really have a most excellent appetite this morning. What time do you expect Storer and John Bull, as he calls himself. I long to see the fellow. He shall have beef enough. We will have a boiled round and a roast sirloin for him. I suppose you will take to eating in the same way when you have shaken off the spell, for I have observed your appetite has been but indifferent lately, and you are certainly thinner, and don't look so well as you used. Well, you will make up for it then, and that will be something more in the butcher's favour."

Bernard, delighted to see the worthy old knight in such spirits, joined in his jocularities, though he felt that it was somewhat premature in him to affect the gaiety of the yeoman while yet embarrassed with the possession of his foolish wish.

About noon Mr. Storer made his appearance for the first time on horseback in the park; and a strange equestrian figure he cut, as the animal which he rode curveted, and fretted, and wriggled from side to side, ever and anon

throwing up its head, to the great peril of the merchant's respectable physiognomy. Sir William and Bernard received him at the door of the old hall; but he was too busily engaged with his steed to take any notice of their salutations till fairly dismounted, and once more standing safe on terra firma. He then turned towards his hosts, and, scarcely able to speak for want of breath, said,

"Morn, Sir Whim, morn, Bernd. Thought never got here. Heugh!—heat I'm in," and taking off his hat, he began wiping his forehead and head.

"Come in, my dear sir," said Sir William. "Don't stand in the draught of air. You'll take cold."

"Go back with that wild beast," cried Mr. Storer to his servant. "Bring back four-wheel chaise. Door—seven precisely."

"I rather expected you would have brought a companion," observed the Knight, as they were crossing the hall.

"Set off with one," replied the merchant. "Gone mad though. Drove my horse mad—

me too pretty near. Met the hounds. Run away with me—couldn't stop him. Never should, hadn't been for my man. Been flying over country now else like wild huntsman. John Bull's at it still, dare say. Saw him go, horse and all, over high hedge, waving's hat and hallooing as if 'twas good fun. Man held mine though, till all out of sight. Set off again else. Never been quiet since. Thought never got here. Bull come to dinner, if don't break his neck. Most likely will though. Well for you 'twasn't yesterday, Bernd."

A basin and towels, and a glass of old madeira and a biscuit soon restored the good man to his wonted equanimity; and then he and Sir William walked out together in the park, where the latter made known his plan, and they had a long, earnest and private conversation, of which our hero was the subject.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WE must now return to the ladies.

On the same evening that Mr. Storer left Brighton, Alicia and Charlotte had a long conference on the old subject, and repeated, over and over again, the same things which they had said on several previous occasions. At length, however, they entered upon fresh ground. Alicia declared that the state of anxiety in which she lived was not to be endured, and, however painful it might be to her feelings, she thought it would be better to submit to an interview with Bernard.

“ Fallen as he is,” said she, “ I cannot but flatter myself that I yet may possess sufficient influence over him to induce him to give up

these cruel and mean persecutions. I shall represent that the only effect they can have, will be to make me fear and hate him. Surely he will then desist !”

Charlotte observed, that all must depend upon the state of her friend’s mind and feelings at the time ; and, withal, that it was a question of so much importance, that she felt great difficulty in expressing any decided opinion ; but, at all events, recommended her to consult her mother. Mrs. Storer was, accordingly, summoned to the conference, and listened very patiently to the proposition, which her daughter concluded by saying,

“ I think that when he knows the miserable state in which his conduct causes me to live, he must be lost to all feelings of compassion, as well as of honour, if he persevere. Perhaps, though, I am wrong in expecting even so much from one who scruples not to suborn a false witness, and bribes another to commit perjury, in order to answer his own purposes.”

Mrs. Storer inquired the meaning of this allusion, and being informed that it pointed to

Counsellor Hawker's defence on the late trial, she said, with her usual candour,

“I cannot suffer you to be unjust, my dear, even to one whom we have all such reason to regret that we ever saw. You know we have, latterly, as if by agreement, avoided speaking of him, hoping that in time we might forget him altogether. But I must tell you that, in that affair, he was not at all to blame. He was entirely ignorant of the steps which had been taken, and expressed great indignation both to the counsellor and to your father. And as for the promise which he gave his uncle, we have no other reason than your alarm of this morning for supposing he has ever broken it. That point, however, will be cleared up, as soon as I get a letter from your father; and, of course, I should prefer hearing from him before I venture to give any opinion upon the propriety of your having an interview with that mysterious person.”

During the four days which elapsed ere the arrival of Mr. Storer's letter at Brighton, Alicia's firmness of resolve was much shaken.

Sometimes she fancied it possible that our hero might again become what he once was; but still the mere possession of that horrid power was terrible to think upon.

“If he but could get rid of that!” she exclaimed—“but no, it is impossible! Equally impossible as I should once have imagined his ever acquiring it. There is no way of escape—no hope on that score—and I must—I will drive away every thought of him.”

But Bernard had won the citadel of her heart, and his image obstinately remained there, in spite of all her resolutions, and the manifold strange fancies and vague terrors connected with the mysterious invisible gift.

When her father's letter from Northamptonshire arrived, another outwork of defence was thrown down, and she was compelled to believe that the alarm she had experienced on the Steyne, was simply one of her own imagination. Then she pitied poor Bernard, and pictured him to herself as roaming in melancholy mood about the old park and grounds, thinking of her, and her alone.

“What could he have done more?” she asked herself. “He has adhered to his word. And then, why should he have abandoned his gift, but because he knew that the exercise of it gave me pain? And then, how did he use it when he had it? It is evident that, on every occasion, it was with the hope of seeing me. If he had banished me from his thoughts, he would surely have retained the use of a power, which, however horrible in itself, would have enabled him to make his observations on other females, in a manner so as to prevent his being deceived in the real character of any one to whom he might have transferred his affection. No—I feel that he has made a sacrifice to ensure my peace of mind, and I must be grateful. It is kind and good in him to have done so. It is a great relief to my mind to find that he is not so very unworthy as I once believed him to be. It was painful to think of that. I sincerely hope now that he may, eventually, be happy, and that he may find some one worthy and——”

But she could not, very pleasantly, go on with her magnanimous wish, for there was a

something soothing to her mind in the idea of a lover's constancy. Indeed, there are few qualities which ladies esteem more, or which so frequently succeed in engaging their affections, as that one of persevering constancy; possibly because it is so rare in our sex.

The confidence which existed between Alicia and Charlotte left the latter little to guess relative to the state of her friend's mind. They sate, and walked, and talked together, upon the old subject, and all was open and confidential between them, for two more days; and then there came a second letter from Mr. Storer, which caused great commotion, and led to serious consultations and examinations. It contained marvellously strange, yet very important matters, requiring deep deliberations. But the writer, for a particular reason, which he forbore to name, insisted upon a speedy and distinct answer. So, first, Mrs. Storer and her daughter were closeted together; and then the young ladies held a council upon its contents.

But, in order to explain what they were, we must go back into Northamptonshire, where we

left Sir William and Mr. Storer walking in Audrey Park, and our hero expecting the arrival of his "new revived" old acquaintance.

"Must put me into a quiet room," said the merchant, as he returned to the hall. "Wants two hours to dinner. Not fond of writing long letters. Can't make this a short one though. Surprise my wife afore reads it—more after—eh? Good woman.—Come at the truth—she and Charlotte. Prime girl, that, Sir Will'm. Ally gone mad without her, do believe. Famous wife make. Wish had a son for her."

Sir William conducted his guest to his own snug little select library, and left him to commence the longest letter he had ever written to his well-beloved spouse.

"Here he comes," exclaimed Bernard, who was standing at the front-door, as his uncle returned from his *sanctum*. The dress of the yeoman, who was seen approaching, was precisely the same as on the preceding day, save that, being mounted, he now wore boots, and his hat was decorated with a fox's brush. There is something in the look of a glorious fox-hunting fellow that wakes up the soul even of a

love-sick, *diablerie*-reading young miss; and the influence was felt and acknowledged by Sir William, as, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, the stranger rode up to the door, threw himself from his horse, and shook Bernard cordially by the hand. Even if John Bull had not been previously the bearer of glad tidings, the Knight felt that he should have given him a hearty welcome. That he did so, under existing circumstances, was a matter of course, and then he expressed a hope that the sport of the day had been agreeable.

“Capital! Sir William,” replied the yeoman; “I’ll tell you how it was. No, I won’t. Long stories are good for nothing before dinner, though they do very well, now and then, over a glass afterwards. So I’ll sing it to you. Here goes!” And in a voice that made the old hall ring, he struck off,

“ ’Twas glorious sport! for none did flag,
Nor drew amiss, nor made a stand;
But all as firmly kept the pace,
As though Acteon were the stag,
And we had hunted by command
Of the Goddess of the chase!”*

* Old Hunting Song.

“ There, sir. That’s just it,” he continued : “ couldn’t have told it better if writ on purpose.”

“ I could find it in my heart to envy your high spirits,” said Sir William.

“ If you are plagued with low spirits, sir,” replied the yeoman, “ let me recommend you to follow the hounds. There’s nothing like it,” and he began singing again,

“ For oh ! it’s a cure for blue devils !

Let them come just in what shape they may.

You ’ll get rid of invisible evils,

By doing what I’ve done to-day.

So,—go hunting—go hunting—go hunting the fox !

And come home with his brush hanging over your locks.

Tally ho ! Tally ho ! Tally ho—ho, ho !”

“ There !” he continued, presenting the brush to Sir William, “ stick that in your hall, my worthy old gentleman, or make a bell-pull of it ; and I hope you and your nephew may bring home as many more as will furnish every room in the house in the same manner.”

“ I accept it with pleasure,” said Sir William, “ and shall often think of you when I look at it.”

“Tally ho! wind him!” shouted the yeoman, pointing to Mr. Storer, who now made his appearance, with a pen stuck behind his ear. “Lost a capital run!”

“Tell you what, Mr. Roderick Random, John Bull, or whatever call yourself,” said the merchant, “how d’ye think a man can write with all this hullabaloo? Give him something to eat, Sir William. Stop his mouth. Know his complaint.”

“A very sensible observation,” exclaimed the yeoman; “no objections to a snack.”

“Tell you what, my friend,” resumed Mr. Storer, “thought yesterday you sometimes talked like sensible man; mad to-day though. Break your neck afore much older—go on at this rate. One devil out—another come in, think.”

“We’ve all got our hobbies,” said the yeoman, laughing, “every one of us; and you, my dear sir—that’s your’s—stuck behind your ear. Many a long day’s mad quill-driving have you had, I’ll warrant. And what for? Botheration—vexation—fretting—anxiety—all

to scrape up a few more yellow boys, when you've got plenty already. Talk like a sensible man, too, sometimes; but once mounted, away you go, and if you don't pull up in time, the blue devils will lay hold of you—while I go hunting, and gain health, spirits, and a good appetite."

"Queer fellow!" observed the merchant.

"Ay, ay. One and one make two," replied the yeoman. "But you're worth saving; so take my advice and get out of the yellow smoke up yonder before it's too late, and come and live down upon your estate, like a hearty country squire and a good fellow as you are at bottom, though no great go at a fence. A great pity that. I was sorry for your horse this morning."

"Were you?" said Mr. Storer. "Very much obliged. Never thought o'me, suppose. Owl upon a duck's back. Out o'my element. Scold you well at dinner, mind that. No time now. Letter to write. Don't sing any more, that's a good fellow. There goes something for you to eat. Keep you quiet a bit, hope."

Tell cook dinner for a dozen, or will be short commons. Mean to pick a bit myself then."

"A picture of a ham!" exclaimed the yeoman, as two footmen passed, carrying a large tray. "Something like a round that! I mean to scold you well at dinner, sir, mind that! Haven't time now. Scent lies strong!"

The merchant then returned to his letter-writing, and Sir William and Bernard conducted their new guest to his "snack," after which he related to the Knight certain passages in his invisible experience.

The hour of dinner arrived, and Mr. Storer's letter was little more than half completed.

"All the better," said he. "Couldn't well have refused to send it off if quite done. Important business. A night to think now. Something else come into my head perhaps. Don't know though. Thought it pretty well over. Think of nothing else indeed."

Notwithstanding the havoc which he had previously made with the ham and the round of beef, the yeoman played the same formidable part with his knife and fork at dinner, as he

had exhibited at Maxdean Hall, and astonished the servants by his repeated calls for ale.

“We shall have precious doings,” thought Andrews. “He’ll be as drunk as a lord before dinner’s over; and when he gets obstropolous, it isn’t all the people in the house that can hold him, I’m sure of that. I never saw such a man! He is as strong as a London dray-horse.”

So, at the next call for ale, the honest valet prudentially handed to the strange guest a tankard filled with small beer.

“Ugh!” exclaimed the yeoman, after just putting it to his lips. “Swipes!—barrel-washings! Take it away, man. Wet the grains with it for the pigs, and keep ’em sober. I’ll trouble you for another slice of that beef, Mr. Audrey. Don’t be particular; I prefer it cut rather thick.”

“Give the gentleman that two-handed cup,” said Sir William. “I have heard ale-drinkers say that it relishes better out of a solid vessel of that kind.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the yeoman, when a

massy embossed silver-cup, holding about three quarts, was placed before him: "there is some sense in this! I'll just look into it," and lifting it with both hands, a sensible vacuum was soon produced.

Bernard was struck by the change in Mr. Storer's manner during dinner. Instead of exhibiting his usual spirits, and good-humouredly scolding John Bull for his morning alarm, as he had threatened, the worthy merchant appeared to be completely occupied with his own thoughts. With the wine, however, he rallied somewhat; and the old subject of invisibility was brought upon the carpet.

"Pray, sir," said Sir William to the yeoman, "will you allow me to ask you why you omitted, when transferring your power to my nephew, to give him the most important part of the secret, that which would have enabled him to get rid of it? I ask this question because I cannot reconcile such concealment with your evident openness of character."

"You forget, my dear sir," replied the stranger, with a sigh—"You forget what I

then was. The constant habit of deceit, and apprehension of the consequences of my invisible tricks, had so reduced me both in body and mind, that I was almost as much terrified as delighted at my sudden success, and was glad to sneak away from Mr. Audrey as soon as I could. I can't think *now* how I could have been so mean as not to go to him again and tell him ; but I dared not. You cannot conceive what a wretch I was ; and sometimes I feel inclined to doubt myself whether I really am the same being. I am sure we are not a bit alike now, either inside or outside. After all, I don't think I ever should have got the better of my invisible pranks entirely, if I had not found a good wife, sound at heart as a bell. She was the only person whom I trusted with my secret, and it now serves us to joke about, though it was no joke at the time for either of us ; for she never would have had me as long as it lasted, and was always fancying that I was watching or following her. She sometimes pulls my ears now and then for a bit of fun ; but there I stick, steady as a rock

to the old girl. No more vanishing, sneaking about, nor suspicion between us. All open as the day—upright and downright. Come, Mr. Audrey, here's to you! and may you have the same good luck! you can't have better. And, as Sir William says he knows a sure way of getting you out of the scrape—why that job's jobbed, as we say.”

“I wonder, after what you have said,” observed Bernard, “that I have not felt myself more altered. I certainly do not feel myself so strong as I was, nor are my spirits what they were; but the situation in which you describe yourself to have been, and what, indeed, I saw in your former appearance, are very widely different from anything that I have experienced.”

“Remember the time I was at it,” said the yeoman. “The change came on by degrees. First I took to lying, because that was absolutely necessary to account for certain things that happened in consequence of my frolics, unless I chose to tell my secret; but I was very careful of *that*, as it promised me lots of fun. I soon found, however, that all my eggs were ad-

dled, or hatched vipers. Then I got on from bad to worse; and so, at last, when I took to wandering about, I made no bones of helping myself to what I could find at an inn or public-house, without troubling myself about paying for it, though I never need have wanted money, as I put what I sold my estate for in the Bank. Ugh! I hate to think of the mean tricks that I was guilty of. I have made amends, of course, as far as I could, and have often found an opportunity of doing some good when engaged on such errands. Indeed, as I told you before, ever since I got rid of my gift, and set about a new course of life heartily, pretty near everything turns out well."

Sir William now became nearly as grave as Mr. Storer, and the task of entertaining his guest devolved entirely upon our hero, till the arrival of the merchant's four-wheeled chaise broke up the party. The yeoman accepted an invitation to stay where he was, in consequence of a promise that he should have one of Bernard's horses to hunt with next day, while his own rested.

"Finish my letter to-morrow," said Mr.

Storer, "as he took leave of Sir William. "Get an answer in a week — can't expect it in less. Two days' post. God bless you, dear sir. Hope all end well."

"Never fear that," replied the Knight, affecting gaiety. "Hard work to bend an old tree, you know. It may fall, and must, when its time comes — but there's no bending it like a twig."

"No — believe not," said the merchant. "Out of nature that — but —" and with the last word on his lips, he drove off, doubtfully shaking his head.

"There goes a most worthy character," observed Sir William.

"No doubt," said the yeoman; "more's the pity that he can't ride better. A famous nag he had under him this morning if he would but have let him go. That's the worst of your cockneys, spending all the best of their days getting money, and then don't know how to enjoy it."

"Perhaps you are a little hasty in your conjectures," observed Sir William, smiling; "the steady performance of one's duties is, perhaps

the greatest pleasure mankind enjoy ; and the consciousness of having performed them, sweetens every other. 'This I know from my own experience, though I have frequently been occupied in a manner which you would deem as irksome as the life of a citizen."

" Ay, ay," replied the yeoman, " you have me there. Nothing like sticking to business, and acting upright and downright ; and when it's a natural sort of business, like that of a farmer or grazier, there's a pleasure in it at the time as well as afterwards. But what pleasure can there be in sitting perched upon a high stool, with a pen stuck in one's hand, day after day, and all day long, year after year ? No—that bangs all my conception."

" It is well we do not all think alike," observed the Knight. " If it were not for such men as our worthy friend, your sheep-shearings would be of little value to you."

" Talking of sheep," said the yeoman, " this park of your's wants stocking sadly."

" There again," said Sir William, " we may observe the difference of our pleasures. Yours

would be perhaps, to have sheep and cattle grazing up to the very door, while nothing could be much more disagreeable to me. The only stock I mean to have will be deer."

"A poor speculation that," observed the yeoman, shrugging his broad shoulders; and then he turned to Bernard, and made some inquiries about the horse he was to ride the next day. This led them to the stables, while Sir William retired for the night to his own room, and made known to the wondering Andrews who their extraordinary guest was, and expressed himself confidently respecting the speedy release of his nephew.

The yeoman enjoyed his sport on the following day, took a hasty but substantial lunch at the hall on his return, and then rode off upon his own horse, promising his venerable host that he would return in ten days according to his particular request.

Nothing worthy of record occurred during the following week, at the termination of which Mr. Storer received the anxiously expected answer to his long and important letter.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEN Alicia had perused her father's long letter in the presence of her mother, the latter addressed her as follows.

“ And now my dear child, every thing must rest with yourself. Consult your young friends ; and above all, consult your own feelings. Examine well what they are toward Mr. Audrey, and act accordingly. Do not let sentiments of compassion towards him influence you in an affair of so much importance ; for the female who gives herself away from such motives becomes, too often, an object of compassion herself. If he were a mere acquaintance, I should say that your compliance with Sir William's proposition would be a duty ; but, situated as you *once* were with his nephew, any renewal of

intercourse between you would be attended with much pain to both, unless you can meet precisely on the same footing and with the same feelings as before. It would be wrong to permit him to hope, if your heart does not decidedly pronounce itself in his favour; and if it does, I trust you will be candid and tell me, and then I will inform you how I think you ought to act. Do not answer me now. Think the matter well over, and I will do the same. Put the letter in your pocket, and show it to your friends if you think fit."

"My mind is in such a state of confusion," replied Alicia, "that I do not know what to say. Certainly I should be glad to hear that he was deprived of that horrid power; and, if anything that I could do would tend to that — for the sake of the past, perhaps I ought not to be too punctilious — yet I should be very sorry for him to imagine that my feelings towards him are at all like what they once were. He must think me very weak to suppose anything of that kind."

"We will not talk on the subject any more

now, my love," said her mother ; " we have neither of us had sufficient time to reflect. Your father recommends us to take one night's consideration at least ; and I have too often had reason to congratulate myself on taking his advice, to neglect it on an occasion like the present, when perhaps my dear child's happiness for life is at stake ; so we will say no more just now. Retire to your room, or to your friends, as you think proper, and do not be hasty in coming to a decision."

The next scene was between Alicia, Charlotte, and Emily. The important letter was again read, and commented upon by Charlotte, very much in the same style as that in which Mrs. Storer had previously expressed herself.

" What a dear delightful, good old man, Sir William must be !" exclaimed Emily ; " I long to see him. I am quite in love with him."

" Excellent !" said Charlotte ; " just the very thing for you, Emmy. You are exactly the good, quiet soul, fit to be an old man's darling ; and so, if we get this knotty business settled, *you* shall marry him."

“No, no—I *dare* not do that,” replied Emily, shuddering; “and I think, on second thoughts, I had better not see him.”

“Well then, I think I shall make him an offer myself,” said Charlotte; “but what do you advise Alicia to do?”

“I am a very poor creature at giving advice at any time,” answered Emily, “and now my head is quite bewildered—every thing about this matter is so strange and mysterious. It would certainly be a delightful thing to see Mr. Bernard Audrey what he formerly was. I cannot bear to think of him now. But it hardly seems right after all—I don’t know what to say.”

“No more do I just at present,” said Charlotte; “so I think we had better adjourn, and take Mr. Storer’s advice. A night’s reflection will clear our heads, it is hoped. I seem to feel a singing in mine; but methinks, amid all the confusion, I hear the sweet notes of a little bird warbling something like hope,” and she cast an intelligent glance at Alicia, who upon meeting it, felt a thrilling blush flit across her cheek.

There was much less talking and much more thinking than usual, during the remainder of that eventful day ; and when Alicia retired for the night, she missed the accustomed visit of Charlotte, who slept in the next room, and had always hitherto kept her company during the preliminary ceremonies for bed.

Our poor heroine felt extremely lonely, and after walking up and down the room several times, sitting down almost as frequently and trying to think, she approached the door of separation between the two apartments, put her ear to the keyhole, listened attentively, and then gave a gentle rap.

“ Is that you, Alicia ? ” inquired her friend.

“ Yes, my dear,” was the reply ; “ I wanted to speak with you.”

“ No, no,” answered Charlotte, “ go to bed like a good girl, and I ’ll talk to you to-morrow-morning.”

“ I won’t keep you long,” said Alicia ; “ do open the door, if only for five minutes. Indeed I have something very particular to say to you.”

“ Well, say it where you are,” replied Charlotte, in a merry tone ; “ I can hear you perfectly well.”

“ How can you be so tiresome ? — so provoking ? — so — cruel ?” exclaimed the poor girl ; and there was something in the tone of her voice which caused her friend to relent. And so the door was opened, and Alicia passed through ; and, though the moment was one of the most important in her life, stood staring vacantly, as if she had utterly forgotten what she meant to say.”

“ Well—out with it !” exclaimed Charlotte, laughing.

“ Do not laugh at me !” said Alicia ; “ pray don’t ! ‘ I cannot bear it.”

“ But you had something *particular* to say ?” observed Charlotte, still in a gay tone, while her dark bright eyes glistened, and seemed, to her poor friend, to be looking wickedly into, and reading the inmost secrets of her heart. Alicia felt unable to support their searching gaze, and looked down for a moment, and then raised her eyes again ; but in the brief interval

a tear had formed, and it fell! So, to hide it, she threw herself upon the neck of her friend, and shed a few more. Charlotte pressed her to her bosom, and let her weep awhile in silence.

The poor girl's first symptom of recovery was a closer embrace. She twined her arms almost convulsively round the neck of her friend, then kissed her cheek, and then sobbed, "Do not despise me, my dear, dear Charlotte!"

"No, no, my sweet girl," replied Miss Read, leading her to a chair, and seating herself beside her, with scarcely any other change in their relative position. "I love you too dearly—I feel for you too much—and to convince you that I do, I will spare you the pain of telling me what you were going to say. There, lay your head again on my shoulder, and I will whisper it in your ear."

"That is impossible," observed Alicia in a low tone, and obeying the command at the same time. "That is impossible, for I do not know myself."

"I do, though," said Charlotte, and putting her lips close to the ear of her friend, she whis-

pered, "You still love Bernard Audrey. You are willing to meet and be reconciled with him again!"

"How *could* you know that?" exclaimed the poor girl; and she looked up for a moment, but the dark eyes above her were yet too brilliant to be encountered; so, relapsing into her former position, she gave way to a fresh flood of tears. These terminated as before, in mutual warm caresses, and ere long her countenance began to brighten and her eyes to glisten mildly, as the flowers in sunshine after a passing shower sparkle with the yet hanging rain-drops.

That the conversation which ensued was somewhat too long to be transcribed in all its details, may easily be imagined. Alicia would not confess in words that she still loved our hero as she formerly had, but said, that she could not bear the idea of his continuing under the influence of that mysterious power when his release appeared to be made dependent upon her.

"I shall certainly not commit myself in the

first instance," she added ; " and as for what may happen afterward, I shall be particularly careful and watchful for my own sake, and even for his will be very guarded in any degree of encouragement which I may give him, with the hope of making him persevere in that line of conduct which he has lately returned to, and in which, in common with all his friends, I must wish him to continue."

Charlotte referred to her own former apparent harshness during the time when " the mysterious personage " was in the habit of exercising his mystery, and made a sort of apology, in case anything which she had then uttered might seem needlessly severe. But she declared that she considered the invisible gentleman and Mr. Audrey, whom she had been introduced to at Maxdean, and whose acquaintance she hoped to renew, to be different individuals.

It was two o'clock in the morning ere the fair friends separated.

" You promised not to stay more than five minutes," said Charlotte playfully, as she listen-

ed to the striking of the hour. "Go along to bed with you, do. You will be pale and nervous to-morrow, and fancy somebody is pulling you about on the Steyne again; and I declare I will never attempt to persuade you to the contrary any more. You shall be the victim of your own wilful imagination."

"I wish the nine times nine days were over!" sighed Alicia.

"No doubt of it," observed Charlotte. "And then, another nine days' wonder—a wedding. I mean to sport lots of invisible things on the occasion, I assure you, if I am bride's-maid, and shall take the small liberty of pulling the bridegroom's ears well, till they ring again, before he goes to church."

"I see you are determined to drive me away," said Alicia; "so good night. One more kiss! I do think I love you better than ever *now*!"

Our heroine had exceedingly pleasant dreams that morning, and the old hall of the Audreys, together with its park and the church, formed

very conspicuous objects in the landscapes which floated before the eyes of her imagination and then vanished into "thin air."

When Mrs. Storer was informed of her daughter's resolution, she said that it was precisely what she had expected, and that, if matters turned out well, as she doubted not they would under her husband's management, she should always reflect with pleasure upon Alicia's having come to so speedy a decision, without any persuasion on her part.

"I think," she continued, "that had you hesitated about seeing the young man, I should have found some difficulty in restraining myself; but now all is straight-forward work, and being your own voluntary act and deed, proves—I won't say what—but I am heartily glad it is so, for there was only that one thing against poor Bernard, and you know what a favourite he used to be both with me and your father, who, I am free to tell you now, has long been convinced of the reality of his reformation and repentance. We always, however, forbore to speak of him before you, being in hopes that

you would forget him, and feeling the impossibility of your union as long as he preserved his dreadful power. You will, perhaps, now be pleased to hear, that since he bound himself never to make use of it again, he has frequently called upon your father in town, and pressed much to be allowed to write to you. We have now no secrets between us, my dear. I shall write to your father to-day, and you may rely on his discretion. Remember, *you* are not at all committed in this transaction. You may subsequently pursue any line of conduct you think proper, according to your judgment and inclinations; but your father would never have listened to any proposals for the renewal of your acquaintance with Mr. Audrey till he had absolutely been dispossessed of his invisible gift. And now he must resign it before he will be admitted into your presence."

The good lady then sat down to write her answer, so anxiously looked for by all parties in Northamptonshire. This task occupied her nearly the whole of that day and all the following morning. Her letter was, consequently, too

long to be copied entirely, but we select the following extracts, as they may serve to justify her against any charge of inconsistency or sudden change of purpose.

“ Miss Read and I have been having a long conversation this morning; and on comparing notes, we find that we have both been long of the same opinion, that our dear girl never could bring herself to think with indifference of the man to whom she was all but married. It must have been a hard trial to her, but her good sense told her how she ought to act, and, no doubt, she would have conquered in the long-run. I hope both the young people will be the better for what is past. As your old favourite Poor Richard says, ‘Adversity keeps a dear school, but fools will learn at no other;’ so, as they are neither of them fools, it is to be hoped the lesson won’t be lost. If you and I had not met with our disappointments, and a little uphill work in our outset in life, we most likely should not be so happy as we are. It is a very great pleasure now to look back at those days. I often think of the time just after you dis-

solved partnership with Lucksall and Goit, and couldn't get your capital out of their concern, and we used to look at every Gazette expecting to see their names. You know how much that business made you avoid speculations afterwards, and what numbers of times you've had reason to be thankful for not giving way to the promising schemes that were offered you . . .”

“ I mean to return home to-morrow, as I want to see several tradespeople, to whom I gave orders to sell different articles, which I bought for Alicia's use, when all was settled for her marriage. It would be a foolish loss to dispose of them now—at all events, it is better to wait the upshot of this business, as, if it should come to anything, and I am pretty certain it must, I shall have to replace them. . . .”

“ There is something about our dear girl's looks to-day that I can't very well describe, but it does me good to look at her. She does not appear exactly in high spirits; but I am sure she is happy. I can see that in every feature of her countenance. She is just gone

out with her young friends, and even her manner of walking is different. If I had not known the reason, I could have told by that, that something particular had happened. Poor thing ! she must have suffered a great deal ! . . .”

“ Remember me very kindly to that dear good man Sir William. Even in the midst of our own troubles, I often thought of him ; but, this last affair crowns all, and I shall never cease to respect and feel grateful to him. As you say, ‘ it is hard to bend an old tree,’ or I should have had my fears. . . .”

“ Another reason for my going to London is, that I shall get your letters so much sooner after they are written. . . .”

“ Sir Marmaduke Bonus and his nephew are here, and called upon us, but nothing more, as you were from home. Alicia pleaded a head-ache, and did not see them. It was her behaviour to that young man that convinced me of what I told you before. She felt and resented his conduct towards poor Bernard in a way which spoke too plainly ; for before she knew of that, she seemed really pleased with

the lieutenant (he is now a captain), and I once had some hopes in that quarter, for he is a young man whom any woman might like, and it is not like our sex to avoid such persons without some very strong prepossession."

On the day after this letter was despatched, the good lady and her three young companions arrived safe in Russell Square.

"How delightful it is," said Alicia, "to be able to sit down and converse freely, without any fear of being overheard!"

"If we had never felt that dread," observed Charlotte, "we should not have had to congratulate ourselves on its removal."

The remembrance of former customs under that roof made it a pleasant thing that night for the friends to retire quietly and securely to rest, though they omitted the ceremony of poking and fencing about with parasols and sticks.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ON Mr. Storer's arrival at Audrey Hall with the anxiously-expected answer to his own long important letter, he was immediately closeted with Sir William.

Their conference lasted scarcely half an hour, but appeared tedious beyond all measure to our unlucky hero, whose feelings at that eventful crisis of his fate were of such a nature as "to be more easily conceived than described."

At length he received a summons, and on entering the library, the merchant shook him warmly by the hand, exclaiming, "Long and intricate business—confused accounts—balance struck at last—happy to say in your favour. Thank your uncle. Made an advance, very

few would've done. Don't know that I should under same circumstances—can't say though."

"Sit down here, my dear Bernard," said Sir William, pointing to a chair close by his side. "I will not keep you in suspense. Our worthy friend here and his good lady, and a third person whom I need not name, have come to a decision which I have no doubt will render you all happy."

"My dear uncle! my dear sir!" exclaimed the overjoyed Bernard. "How can I? No—I cannot express my gratitude as I would. It is impossible!"

"Then do not attempt it," continued Sir William, smiling. "Leave that sort of thing for the present, and listen to what I have to say. Mr. Storer has consented that you shall have an interview with the young lady, and that, if you can persuade her, your former intercourse with her and the family may be renewed."

"Alicia is too noble-minded!" exclaimed her lover, "too generous—too good—too

just—not to forgive when she is convinced that I am no longer under that evil influence which I have forsworn.”

“All now depends entirely on yourself,” resumed the Knight. “There is a certain condition annexed to this permission; and *that* must previously be fulfilled before we can move a single step.”

“You have but to name it, sir,” said Bernard, addressing the merchant. “There is nothing that I would not attempt—nothing I will not abandon, for the sake of your daughter. Her image has never been absent from my mind since our unfortunate separation. Whatever my other faults and failings may have been, I have never changed in the sincerity of my affection for her.”

“Well, well—believe that,” replied Mr. Storer. “Think you like the girl well enough—used to like you too little bit, eh? May again, perhaps—can’t say though—depends on yourself. Long and short of it is, you must get rid of this confounded gift same way John Bull did—transfer it. When that’s done

all regular — see Ally — talk nonsense to her again. Not else though.”

Our hero listened, turned pale, and sank back in his chair, unable to utter a word. His newly-springing hope seemed blighted in the bud.

“You need not despair,” said his uncle. “Recollect what I told you. The way is clear and distinct before us.”

“Sir!” exclaimed Bernard, gazing vacantly, as if unable to comprehend or credit what he heard.

“Yes,” resumed Sir William. “Nothing can be clearer; and please to remember your voluntary promise to be guided by me, and to obey my instructions to the very letter.”

“I will follow them, be they what they may,” said Bernard. “But where am I to go? Where am I to look? How can I hope to find any individual so besotted—so foolish—so mad as I was, to utter such a preposterous exclamation! And even if I could meet with such a person, *that* would not be sufficient. He must *really* wish to possess my detested power, and

utter his wish nine times, without solicitation or persuasion. No—there can be no other such an idiotic wretch upon the face of the earth except myself!”

“You are somewhat severe,” observed his uncle, smiling; “but I forgive you. Now—look me in the face, and you will see your man. I wish to possess your gift. Yes, I *wish* it—I will and must have it from you. I wish it for my own sake as well as yours; we shall then both be happy. There is no other way. Don’t look so astonished, but go to work directly—there are two boxes of ointment all ready.”

As the worthy old Knight proceeded to repeat “I wish to be invisible”! nine times, there was a gay playfulness in his manner, and a bright sparkling in his eyes, strongly indicative of the delight which he experienced in rendering his nephew so invaluable a service.

“Never shall I forget this noble sacrifice which you are willing to make for my happiness!” exclaimed Bernard. “But I cannot consent to embitter the remainder of your days to secure my own felicity. Alicia herself would

despise me were I guilty of such meanness. No, Sir. Live happy, as you deserve to be. I, and I alone, ought to and will endure the consequences of my own folly."

The worthy Knight was prepared for something of this sort, and immediately replied, "Gently, sir, gently. Can you not have the complaisance, I might perhaps say the justice, to give me credit for a *little* more discretion in the use of my gift than fell to the lot of a young lover scarcely of age? Do you think that I shall begin by playing at hide and seek with a leash of fair damsels? or pulling bell-ropes, or thrashing resurrection-men? No, no. It will be safe in my keeping—so no more words, but as the man in the play says, 'Leave off your damnable faces and begin.' There is my ear!"

"It is impossible, sir," replied Bernard. "You might as well ask me to plunge a dagger in your breast. I have no doubt that you would make use of it in a very different manner from what I have done; nevertheless I cannot but remember that, without the smallest evil intention

on my part, the most painful consequences have resulted from my disappearances. Your utmost care could not prevent something of the kind, to yourself or others. Your life would become wretched and irksome to you as my own. No, Sir. Let the burden rest where it is. Continue to enjoy that happiness which you have never forfeited by your folly, and I will banish every other thought, and live with you in this retirement, and do all in my power to increase your comfort."

Sir William, finding that he could not carry his point by a '*coup de main*,' now changed his plan of attack, and represented seriously to his nephew, that a refusal to grant his request would *certainly* render them both miserable for life, whereas a compliance would ensure to each the happiness he had most at heart.

"My only wish on earth," said he, "is to see you settled in life before I die. Nothing else remains for me to desire, and yet you refuse me that, and condemn yourself to misery, upon the frivolous pretext that I may possibly get into some foolish scrape. Use your own reason, and

recollect my retired habits and my years, and you will perceive how very unlikely it is that anything of that sort should occur to me."

What more was said on that occasion, was much to the same effect, save that Sir William, at each repetition of his argument, became more and more earnest, and even pathetic: and at length he concluded, by saying despondently, "Then you have pronounced my doom, Bernard. You have condemned my grey hairs to descend in sorrow to the grave, and it will not be long first. I looked not for this at your hands. I never before asked a favour of you. When you pass my tomb, you will repent; but it will be too late. As you wander lonely and miserable by, you may reflect that I might have lived to see you happy. But alas! you now condemn me to die the most cruel of deaths — that of a broken heart. I feel it cannot last much longer."

Bernard was greatly affected by his uncle's despondency, but could not bring his mind to act as he was desired. After sitting awhile in silence, with his face hid in his hands, the thought struck him that delay might serve at

least for reflection, and he said, "What else could you have asked of me, my dearest uncle, that I would not have granted? Do not be unjust towards me, I entreat of you! I will not say more now; but will follow your own excellent plan, and let a night pass before I give you a definitive answer."

"Be it so," replied Sir William.

"Ay, ay, very proper," said Mr. Storer. "Matter of importance. Think better of it—come upon him of a sudden. That's my way. Cheer up, both of you—take a walk—all end well, dare say. Made me quite dull. Got blue devils, do believe—go and shake 'em off."

The fact was, that the worthy merchant had been greatly moved by the scene he had just witnessed: and the part which Bernard took in it raised him so much in his good opinion, that had the question related to a niece, or a ward, or even one of a dozen daughters, he might have consented to a reconciliation in defiance of all invisible risks. But the case of an only child was not so easily to be disposed of; so as Sir William declined walking, he invited

our hero to accompany him in a stroll round the park.

“Don’t wonder at your making objections,” said he, when they had got some distance from the hall,—“come upon you of a sudden. Does you credit—expected as much. Had scruples at first, myself. Thought the matter well over since—got rid of ’em all. No danger with Sir William. Man at his time of life—all humbug. Be as happy as day’s long.”

Bernard repeated the old story of consequences not being guided by intentions, and the injustice of shifting the burden which he had brought upon his own shoulders on those of an innocent person.

“Tell you what have been thinking about,” said Mr. Storer. “Let me arbitrate between you—got through many a tough job in that way. People often a little blind in their own concerns—take one side of question—one way of thinking—go on with it—won’t look round—run straight forward—knock heads against posts—wonder how it happened—looker-on see plain enough.”

“I shall feel grateful to you for any advice you will be pleased to favour me with,” replied Bernard; “but I think no argument will be sufficient to induce me to inflict such an injury on one who has been as a father to me, from the first dawn of my recollection up to the present moment !”

“No injury at all,” said the merchant. “Have it all in your hands the way I propose. Watch him—keep your eye upon him—live with him—soon see how he goes on. Make him promise, before you go through ceremony, that he shall return you your gift if you make a demand of it, all in the regular way. Won’t break his word—sure of that. You won’t want it if he’s happy, eh?—see what I mean?—catch the idea?”

“I do, and I thank you for it!” exclaimed Bernard, gratefully; for again a gleam of hope broke in upon him: but having been allowed a night for reflection, he resolved not to decide hastily.

Mr. Storer had gone to the extremest limits of his usual prudence, in hazarding this propo-

sition ; but he calculated much on the influence of Alicia over the mind of her lover, and judged it improbable that, when Bernard had once got rid of his gift, he could ever *really* wish to have it restored, when he must know that such a step would be attended with the forfeiture of all his prospects.

During the remainder of that day the subject was dropped, by mutual consent ; and in order to furnish other topics of conversation, the rector was invited to dine at the hall.

Mr. Storer, moreover, being anxious for the events of the coming morning, accepted the offer of a bed, and altogether the evening passed off as smoothly as could be expected under existing circumstances.

When Bernard retired for the night, it was not of course immediately to fall asleep. It is not, however, necessary to pursue the multitudinous and frequently confused fancies, fears, hopes, and trains of reflection, in which he occupied his restless hours. Suffice it to say that he perceived the judiciousness of Mr. Storer's plan, and ere morning had resolved to adopt it.

“It will satisfy my uncle, at least for the present,” said he, “and I shall observe him narrowly, and reclaim the power I give him whenever I perceive the smallest traces of uneasiness.”

When he made known the result of his cogitations at breakfast, Sir William agreed to accept the proposition, if he might be allowed to introduce one saving clause; and that was, to be at liberty to retain his gift, in case Bernard did not claim it during the time that he might continue single. There was some demur on this question, as our hero felt that, in such a case, his marriage would be something like passing a sentence of perpetual invisible trouble upon his uncle. Mr. Storer, however hit upon an expedient, which, after a little farther debate, appeared to content all parties. It was agreed that, in the event of Bernard's marriage, the demand for a restoration of the troublesome gift should be equally obligatory, provided his wife joined him in making the request.

“I am sure Ally will never do that,” thought Mr. Storer.

“I am certain Alicia will not suffer my dear uncle to continue unhappy when she knows how much we are indebted to him for everything,” said Bernard to himself.

“No wife can *really* wish her husband had the power of being invisible,” concluded Sir William.

So each was satisfied, and nothing remained to be enacted save the mysterious ceremony. Perhaps Sir William was a little nervous, but he affected gaiety. Our hero's hand shook — frequently he hesitated — and was altogether much agitated during the performance of the operation. Mr. Storer could hardly refrain from laughter, to which he was encouraged to give full vent by the Knight. At length all was finished; the spell was complete. Sir William pulled himself out of sight — then re-appeared — shook his head — laughed heartily — and appeared exceedingly to enjoy his new possession.

“There, Bernard, my dear boy,” said he; “I have made use of the gift, you see, and that releases you. Never fear for me. I hardly think I shall ever avail myself of it again; but,

if I should, rely upon it that it shall be with due discretion. And now, my dear sir," he continued, turning to Mr. Storer, "you will have another letter to write, and my little *sanc-tum* is quite at your service for the whole of the morning. Come, Bernard, you and I will go for a ride together. I declare I feel myself quite like a boy again. Instead of making me old, as it served our friend the yeoman, the charm seems to have produced quite a contrary effect on me. And you—I fancy you look better already; that is, you would, if you would but lay aside that serious air. That does not become you at all. So, away with it! Upon my word, if you do not, I shall really begin to doubt whether you like the young lady, after all. One would think, to look at you, that you were about to be forced into a match with peevish old age and ugliness."

"I cannot quite conquer my fears on your account, sir," said Bernard. "I remember but too well, how delighted I was at first."

"Tush, tush, man," said the gay old Knight; "our cases are widely different; so order the

horses, that's a dear boy, for I am sure our good friend wishes us out of the way."

Sir William was in such high spirits during their ride, that his nephew often dreaded lest he should commit some invisible frolic. Indeed, the old gentleman could not help observing, that an invisible overseer might be a useful person among a number of workpeople; and doubtless such a surveillance would make a considerable alteration in the Saturday night receipts of many who were paid for labouring by the hour.

"If you give way to such thoughts, sir," said Bernard, "I shall certainly claim the fulfilment of your promise. Indeed, I am hardly satisfied with myself for what has passed this morning."

"What!" exclaimed the hilarious Knight; "regret making me happy! Come along, old Peter!--let you and I leave the misanthrope!" and urging his sturdy little Suffolk punch, he cantered across the park towards a distant plantation.

Not for many years had spring appeared so like what it was wont to be in the days of his

youth, as it did on that memorable day to the worthy Sir William. The trees were just beginning to shoot forth their leaves, and it seemed to him as though the merry feathered songsters were warbling their wild wood notes purposely for his pleasure, and to congratulate him upon re-appearing among them. He felt, indeed, like a bird escaped from its cage. There could scarcely be a greater contrast than that between his present sensations and the melancholy, hypochondriac mood in which he had latterly confined himself to his room, eternally sipping the old woman's sovereign herb-tea. His favourite nag too, old Peter, seemed to enter into his master's feelings, and, by shaking his head and occasionally pricking up his ears, gave manifest tokens of more than his wonted vivacity. Even Bernard, before the ride was at an end, began to settle down to a conviction that the course he had adopted, would prove beneficial to all parties. As they were returning to the hall, they were met by Mr. Storer.

“How is this?” exclaimed Sir William. “I thought you had been engaged writing.”

“Done,” replied the merchant. “Gave my wife short metre for once. Run up to London myself — nothing like word of mouth. Pore over letters — find out meanings never meant. Talk to Ally — drop you a line — soon set all square.”

“We will go likewise,” exclaimed the Knight. “A journey will do me good at this delightful season of the year.”

“No, no — better stop where you are,” said Mr. Storer. “Leave all to me — country best for you. Know why you want to go — Bernard too — see by his looks. No hurry — understand one another now. Bring ’em back with me, perhaps — can’t say though. Women like to do things their own way — know that pretty well.”

The Knight, however, did not feel disposed at once to give up the idea of so pleasant an excursion, and the question was again agitated at dinner, but was eventually dropped, in consequence of Mr. Storer’s assurance that he should not remain in town more than a few days.

“Tell you all about it now — no use before.

Had made all my arrangements — agreed to let one of my partners have the house in Russell Square — that's a bargain — can't be off that *now*. Was to have it for year and half — give us two summers, one winter. Meant to have gone on the continent — no other way of getting out of reach of that young gentleman — eh? Change of scene done Ally good. Pretty many things to gape at there, tell me — better pleased to stay at home, though — tell you that honestly. No secrets now. John Bull came just in time to stop us — been off next week else."

"We have had a narrow escape," observed Sir William, looking serious for the first time since his anointment. "If you had gone, you and I should never have met again in this world. I should have quitted it miserably, and what would have become of poor Bernard, I know not. Well — we will not look back gloomily. Allow me to propose, in the old-fashioned way, the health of the young lady, without the hope of whose smiles even now my nephew would hardly have escaped. I do not know

that I could have *really* wished for his gift but from my hopes in that quarter, and but for his I think he would scarcely have consented to part with it to me."

"Had a pretty job to find another customer for the article," observed the merchant. "Nothing to be said in its favour — been a drug in the market."

"Here's to Miss Alicia Storer," said the Knight, gaily lifting a bumper — "health, happiness, and long life to her; and may her future husband never entertain a thought, nor commit an act, that he would wish to be invisible!"

"Drink that with great pleasure," said Mr. Storer. "Don't think he will — better for experience. Upright and downright now, as John Bull says — knows what comes of the other way now, eh? — that's something."

Bernard took little part in the remainder of the conversation, his mind being absent on pleasant excursions with Alicia. In the mean while the elders chatted on, till Mr. Storer's four-wheeled chaise came to the door, and then he took his departure for Maxdean Hall, with the

resolution of proceeding to town on the following morning.

The worthy Knight and nephew enjoyed sound sleep and pleasant dreams that night; but the latter was not able entirely to get rid of certain apprehensions concerning the uneasiness which his gift might cause to his uncle, and his fears were not altogether without foundation.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE day succeeding that of the transfer of the mischievous gift, passed tranquilly at Audrey Hall ; but in the middle of the following night, the whole household were aroused from their slumbers by the shrill, shrieking, and loud outcries of old Patty. She was found upon the stairs, with a candle in her hand, screaming, “ I ’ve lost him ! I ’ve lost him ! He ’ll catch his death o’ cold ! ”

The servants came flocking from their dormitories like bats flying to the light, and surrounding the witch-like old body, inquired the cause of her alarm.

“ He ’s gone off somewhere,” she replied, “ without nothing on but his shimmy. No slippers—no stockings—no nothing. His clothes

and dressing-gown, and all the rest o' his purtenances is by the bedside, and I 've been looking in all the places as I could think on—but he's nowhere."

Bernard had approached the motley group sufficiently near to hear the last words; and guessing the real cause of the uproar, proceeded to his uncle's room, and found him hastily dressing.

"Don't disturb yourself, my dear sir," said our hero.

"What is the matter, Bernard?" exclaimed the Knight. "Fire or thieves?"

"Neither, sir," was the reply. "The simple fact is, that the old woman has lost sight of you, and I suspect you have been pulling your ear."

Sir William replied that he supposed he must have done so in his sleep, as when he was awakened by the outcry, he found himself invisible.

The welcome intelligence, that their worthy master was found, was immediately communicated to the servants, and in a few minutes all

became quiet as before, save the muttering of old Patty, who wanted exceedingly to know where her patient had been, and prophesied that he had caught his death of cold. Sir William, however, deemed it perfectly unnecessary to answer her queries, and told her he wished to go to sleep. So she sate down and mumbled to herself, and wondered and wondered, and the more she wondered, the more she became perplexed to conceive how he could have got out of the room and back again without her seeing him, and where he could have been, and what he had been doing, and so forth. The only conclusion she arrived at was, a determination to watch him well for the future; and, to do the old woman justice, this resolution was not the result of mere curiosity, but from an apprehension that he had taken to walking in his sleep. Still, however, that supposition was not sufficient to account for his escaping unseen and unheard by her, and she remained in a state of especial bewilderment.

When Sir William and Bernard met at

breakfast the next morning, the former was disposed to be jocular on the subject of the nocturnal alarm.

“ The poor old woman has been pumping me, as they call it,” said he. “ But I have left her to her guesses ; for, even if I were inclined to make up a story, as I easily could, I recollect how ill such inventions answered your purpose. So, you perceive, I have withstood the first temptation, and have no doubt all will go on well.”

Bernard had misgivings on the subject, but resolved to say nothing that might check his uncle’s spirits, till he became really involved in some invisible perplexity, in which event the gift might be reclaimed. In the mean while he determined to watch its possessor closely.

What the effect of his watching might have been is uncertain, as the post brought him the following letter from Mr. Storer :

“ DEAR BERNARD,

“ Don’t lose a moment after you get this ; but come to town by the night coach, and put

up at the Green Dragon in Bishopsgate Street, and wait there till I call upon you, as I have something *very* particular to tell you. *Do not* let your uncle come with you, *on any account*, as *I know* the journey would do him harm. My respects to him.

“Yours truly,

“J. STORER.”

As the merchant was accustomed to do common things in an uncommon way, his epistle did not cause that degree of alarm which it would have excited, if written by a different character.

“You will judge for yourself when you get to town,” observed Sir William. “I certainly agree with our eccentric friend, that a night’s journey is not the best of all possible remedies for an invalid; but do not allow me to be left out, if there should be anything very agreeable going forward, as I can post up pleasantly in a day, at this season of the year.”

Pent up in a corner of the coach, Bernard, during the gloomy hours of night, endeavoured

to guess what particular communication Mr. Storer could wish to make to him; and, as every circumstance was important at the present momentous crisis, he fell occasionally into sombre reveries, and fancied that the cup of happiness was again about to be dashed from his lips. The dawn of a lovely morning served afterwards to revive his spirits, and he entered London, full of hope, and anticipating a speedy interview with Alicia; but his trials were not yet over. When Mr. Storer called at the inn, there was a peculiarly lugubrious and embarrassed expression in his countenance, the reason of which he proceeded to explain, by handing a newspaper to our hero, after preparing him to expect ill tidings. There appeared to be a mist floating before Bernard's eyes as he read the following paragraph:

“It was yesterday our painful duty to announce the death of Captain H. B. Popwell, of the — regiment, as we then stated, in consequence of wounds received in the Peninsula, and from which he had long suffered. We are grieved to say, that the friends of this gallant

officer are of a very different opinion. They attribute his untimely end to an injury which he received in an affair miscalled one of honour, and in which it is more than whispered there was foul play. A rigid investigation is now in progress by eminent surgical practitioners. Any lengthened comment at present would be premature, but we cannot refrain from observing, that, if it shall be proved that any unfair advantage was taken by the opposite party in the duel alluded to, no case ever called more loudly for the execution of the extreme rigour of the law."

The shock at such a moment was too much for our hero. He felt stunned by the blow, and sate for some minutes silent and motionless with his eyes fixed vacantly upon the paper. At length, with a convulsive gasp he exclaimed,

"What must I do?"

"Must act," said Mr. Storer. "No use crying 'Lord help me!' Know you were not guilty of anything unfair, as they call it. Go to Bath directly—take your surgeon with you—shew your innocence that. Tell in your favour

afterwards. Let worst come to the worst, you've your nine times nine days, remember—but no need of them, hope. Face trouble always—meet difficulties half way. Drive them before you then—follow *you* else—always found it so. Don't lose a moment."

This was the severest of our hero's trials. He felt like the seaman storm-driven from the harbour's mouth after a long and dangerous voyage; but he resolved to face the gale manfully, and was strengthened in his resolution by the feeling that he was not now acting for himself alone, as Mr. Storer scrupled not to tell him that Alicia was acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and, together with her mother and young friends, would be anxiously looking for the result of his exertions.

Accompanied by the surgeon who had attended him after the duel, he arrived in Bath early on the following morning, and had soon reason to congratulate himself on the celerity of his movements. The inquest had been adjourned from day to day. The opinions of the medical men were divided; but the evidence of Lieute-

nant Stiff respecting the unfairness of the shot, and his repetition of Captain Popwell's words, had produced a very unfavourable impression on the minds of the jury. Nothing perhaps could have removed that impression except the clear and scientific description which Bernard's surgeon gave of the nature of the wound he had received on the occasion, the natural effect of which would be the dropping of the arm involuntarily. Captain Brown, who in his anxiety respecting his fallen friend had not noticed that our hero was wounded at all, appeared greatly struck by this new feature in the case, and abated much of the almost ferocious manner in which he had hitherto driven things forward to a prosecution.

As this was Bernard's last fiery ordeal, we shall not linger to describe his feelings during the vibrations of the nicely-poised scales of justice. That he suffered acutely, may be imagined, as the decision of the jury would either condemn him to undergo a public trial for murder, or restore him to peace and happiness, and Alicia.

The day of his arrival ended, like those which had already passed, in an adjournment. On that which followed, his surgeon, a gentleman who had ranked very high in his profession, called the attention of his brethren to certain appearances which hitherto had escaped notice, and which could have no possible connexion with the wound unintentionally inflicted by Bernard. His reasoning was powerful; a closer examination proved its correctness, and a verdict was returned accordingly.

On our hero's return to London he found a note from Mr. Storer, requesting him to call at the counting-house as soon as possible after his arrival. He repaired consequently without delay to Mincing Lane, and received the worthy merchant's congratulations on the success of his expedition.

"Dine with us to-day in Russell Square?" he then said. "All in a family way — old times again, eh?" and his eyes sparkled with pleasure at the delight which he saw his invitation imparted.

"Would it not be better for me to call first,

in the course of the morning, sir?" murmured Bernard, doubtfully.

"No, no; make a scene that," replied Mr. Storer. "Let bygones be bygones. All settled — old woman and I talked it over. Come as you used — as if nothing had happened. Shake hands all round. If see Ally flustered, chat to t'other girls a bit — come about then. Sit down while I write a line home — tell the good news — say you're coming to dinner — have all ready then. Got something else to tell you after — droll story. Got a scheme in my head — think it'll do. Haven't been idle since you were gone."

When the letter to his wife was finished and despatched by a messenger, the merchant informed his visiter that he had been spending the two previous days in Northamptonshire, and slept both nights at Audrey Hall, for the purpose of securing any newspaper which might arrive there containing the alarming paragraph. He had thus saved Sir William from much anxiety, as well as by telling him that he must not be surprised if he did not hear from his

nephew for a day or two, as he had left Alicia confined to her room from a sudden illness, and too unwell to see anybody. The cause of this illness he deemed himself not bound to state; but such was the fact, as any young lady may guess, by supposing her favoured lover to be in manifest peril of the gallows.

“ Well,” continued Mr. Storer, “ couple of gay old chaps we were. Drove your uncle over each day to Maxdean — did him good. — Stirred him up. John Bull dined one day — ate more than ever, think. Must leave off hunting soon, unless rides an elephant — said so at dinner, unluckily. Got a long-winded East Indian proser for my pains — serve me right — great fool for that — ought to have known better — elephant ticklish subject — always runs away — no — crawls off with nabobs. All got our hobbies — eh? Well — never mind. Droll story to tell you. Know uncle’s old witch who swills him with tea? Old fool took it into her head he’d got cold riding with me. Would sit up with him — middle of night saw his night-cap o’ one side — must needs put it straight.

Twitched his ear — whiff! — he was gone! — such a hullabaloo! Squalled like a thousand cats! — off next morning — slop, wash, and all — capital job that! No more drenching. Swears uncle's betwattled — never come near hall again — famous that! Sir William thank himself. Understands men pretty well — knows nothing about women, though — never married, or been up to 'em better. Ever hear story about riding Towler?"

"No, sir," replied Bernard, "I have no recollection of anything of the kind."

"Tell it you then," said Mr. Storer, — "worth remembering. Be of service to you, perhaps. Man had a young wife — took it into 's head to be jealous of a friend — no cause, dare say. Was going from home — meant to tell her to avoid company of said friend; but by good luck asked advice of another; — sensible man — knew better — said 'Never do that! — way to make her think of him, if never did before — women do anything tell not. Try her — tell her be sure not to ride upon Towler, great savage yard dog, while you're absent — see

what'll happen.' Husband took friend's advice — gave particular charge not to ride dog — wife stared, laughed, promised, — never dreamt of such a thing — afraid of dog too — soon ha' thought of riding a dragon, if hadn't been told not. Husband gone, went to look at Towler directly — gave him bones — got friendly by degrees — scratched his head — patted his back — lost all fear — got a straddle — had a tumble — scratched her face — no hiding that — when husband came back, laid all blame on him — said she fancied dog-riding must ha' been something very pleasant, or wouldn't have been denied to her. Catch the moral, dare say, eh?"

"Thank you, sir," said Bernard, "then I suppose my uncle told the old woman not to meddle with his ears?"

"No — not quite so bad," said the merchant, "said his head; but she wasn't likely to pull his nose, you know."

"I hope no evil consequences will result from the old woman's garrulity," said Bernard; "I fear every circumstance, however trifling,

which results from that foolish wish of mine. She will be sure to tell her story all over the country."

"And who'll believe her?" asked Mr. Storer. "Let her alone — nine days wonder. But I've a scheme in my head — think I can find Sir William a customer for his troublesome article. See about it this morning — perhaps let you know about it after dinner — must leave you now — got an engagement — so have you — write to your uncle. Five o'clock, remember — all in the family way. Give Ally your arm — won't refuse that, dare say. Don't bother her — hate scenes — no use. Understand one another, that's enough."

Bernard returned to his inn, and indited a long letter to Sir William, containing full particulars of his recent difficulties and narrow escape, and promising to write again on the morrow, when he should have seen Alicia.

While he was thus employed, Mr. Storer paid a visit to old Sir Close Hawker, whom he found engaged in deep calculations of interest, compound interest, annuities, and other mat-

ters, whereby to place his money out to the greatest possible advantage. On such subjects their conversation naturally turned, and after some previous chat the merchant observed,

“Close by name, Close by nature, eh? Always on the right side at Stock Exchange. Look upon it you’ve got some friends behind the scenes — Downing Street — eh?”

“Ah! my dear Sir!” sighed the miserable old man; “if one could *but* know what was going on there! That would be a mine of wealth indeed. Last week there was a fall of half per cent. I think once I could have bought in at five eighths less than the day before. If I had but sold out, I should have cleared above six hundred pounds.”

“It would be a capital thing to be invisible sometimes,” observed Mr. Storer, “walk into Foreign Office — read despatches — look over answers — see instructions — know which way the bull runs then, eh?”

“What an idea!” exclaimed Sir Close. “The very thought makes one’s mouth water! That would *indeed* be like finding the philosopher’s

stone. *How could* such a notion enter into your head? I am sure I shall dream of it. What a prospect! What an extraordinary thought! My dear sir! you are quite poetical?

"Never made a rhyme in my life," said Mr. Storer—"never tried but once—before I was married—made a poor go of it. Can quote though :

Poet's born, not made,
Every man stick to his trade.

"What I said wasn't my own fancy. Good reason to think it more than fancy though. Such things have been before now, and not long since, either."

"Eh! what?" exclaimed Sir Close. "A sensible man like you talk in that way! You surely do not mean to say that you believe in any supernatural agency?"

"Call it what you will," observed the merchant—"seeing's believing. More than guess for what I say."

"My dear sir," said the miser. "I can hardly credit my ears. A man be invisible! The thing is morally impossible."

“So you say,” continued Mr. Storer; and so I said too, till convinced to the contrary. But I tell you plainly, I know a gentleman who can be so whenever he pleases. Done in a moment. Quick — presto — goes and comes like jack o’ lantern. Seen him myself.”

“If any one but a gentleman of Mr. Storer’s respectability had told me such a tale,” observed Sir Close, gravely, “I should certainly have laughed at him to his face. But, my dear sir, if you consider the thing coolly, you must perceive its utter impossibility. Some deception was, doubtless, practised upon you. What they call ‘an optical delusion,’ most probably.”

“Very likely,” replied the merchant. “It was quite complete, though. Not a bit of the man to be seen by any one present. Could hide himself long as he liked—go where he pleased.”

“They do make strange discoveries now-a-days,” said Sir Close, musingly: “very strange! But *this* is one which—I—should—yes I should like very much to see myself. I love to patronise men of genius and talent in every walk of life. It is melancholy to think that they are so

often poor. I think you hinted that the circumstances of this gentleman were not quite in a flourishing state?"

"Contrariwise," replied Mr. Storer—"got a good fortune. Doesn't wish to increase it."

"A *most singular* character, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Close. "But really, it is a pity, quite a sin, that such an extraordinary discovery should remain useless! I have a great respect for gentlemen who devote their leisure to philosophical research. The human mind cannot be more nobly employed. I always make a point of seeking their acquaintance, whenever opportunity offers. Would it be too much to ask of you, my dear Sir, if you could possibly contrive to favour me with an introduction to your friend?"

"Can't say," replied the merchant. "Quiet habits—lives retired, in the country."

"I should not object to a journey," observed Sir Close. "Indeed I had some idea of making an excursion. The state of my health requires a little relaxation; and of course it can be of little consequence in what direction I go, pro-

vided it is into the country. You would, perhaps, not object to favour me with an introductory letter?"

"Not at all, not at all," replied Mr. Storer. "Stop a day or two, though. Did talk of coming to town. Won't send you on wild goose's errand—make sure of him first. Let you know, depend upon't. Remember though, mum's the word—mustn't drop a hint. Don't know that I ought to have told you. Be plagued to death if't got abroad—people want him to come to London to exhibit like Daniel Lambert, Hottentot Venus, and so on."

"You may rely upon me, my dear sir!" said the miser, "My sole wish is to form an acquaintance with a gentleman who has made such progress in the sciences. I am really extremely anxious to make his acquaintance."

"We'll manage it," said Mr. Storer. "Contrive it somehow, never fear. If he doesn't come to town, shall be in the country myself next week or week after. Doesn't live far off my place—send you an invitation to come and see me. Introduce you then—all in regular

way. Sound him first though—not very fond of strange faces. Friend of mine though—make great difference that. He and I very intimate.”

“My dear sir,” said Sir Close, “I do not know how to thank you sufficiently. If I come to see you, pray do not make any difference on my account—I hate to put anybody to expense.”

“Never make difference for anybody,” replied Mr. Storer. “Shan’t ask you if not glad to see you. Hear from me in a day or two. Quarter past four! must be off.”

On his way home the worthy merchant congratulated himself exceedingly on the success which promised to attend his endeavours for liberating Sir William.

CHAPTER XL.

WHEN Bernard made his appearance in Russell Square, he was received by Mrs. Storer with all the cordial familiarity of old acquaintance. Her open-hearted kindness, together with past recollections, produced a certain degree of nervous tremour in her visiter, and he seemed about to give utterance to his feelings, when she rose and requested his arm.

“ We will walk into the back drawing-room if you please,” she continued. “ You will probably find some friends there.”

These words, spoken loudly, prepared both parties for the interview, as Alicia was sitting in the room mentioned upon a sofa, between her two friends, clasping a hand of each as firmly as if she was about to have a tooth drawn.

The folding doors were already open, and as Bernard came through, he very unpolitely left the lady of the house to shift for herself, and as the fair nymphs were rising, contrived to get hold of both Alicia's hands, and shook them both much more than was necessary, inasmuch as had he let them alone, they would have shaken of their own accord.

Something like a scene would probably have followed, if Charlotte had not reminded him of her presence, by saying playfully, "And me too, if you please."

So he released one of Alicia's hands, and went through the friendly ceremony with the other two young ladies, and then when they all four sate down upon the sofa, poor little Emily had lost her place. Time seemed to have been nicely calculated by the elders, or Bernard might have forgotten Mr. Storer's hint respecting a division of his attentions among the young ladies before dinner. To be sure, he was not in a very talkative strain, but he whispered something to Alicia about her health, and she faintly whispered, and would soon have whimpered

something in reply, had not her father entered at the moment, with his watch in his hand, exclaiming, "Wants three minutes."

Bernard, of course, rose to receive the welcome of his host, and Charlotte, taking advantage of his momentary absence, whispered into Alicia's ear,

"Excellently done, my delicate Ariel! but don't spoil all *now* by going blubbering through all the servants down stairs to dinner."

There was a moisture gathering in Alicia's eye — but a sunny smile succeeded — the mist disappeared — and in three minutes they all started, as a jockey would say, for the plates.

Only one allusion to invisible affairs was made during dinner, when Mr. Storer remarked that his guest had not yet taken so kindly to his beef as John Bull. Indeed, neither of the lovers were very alert with the knife and fork, nor did either utter anything particularly brilliant. Possibly like two ships, eager to come to a close engagement, they thought it prudent to reserve their fire. So the dinner hour was not

altogether the gayest that had ever passed at the merchant's hospitable board.

"Come, my dear fellow," exclaimed the good man, as soon as the ladies had retired, "we will take a glass of wine or two together, but won't detain you long—know you want to follow 'em. Expect one of my partners here presently. Invited himself to dinner—told him wouldn't have him. Get his beefsteak in the city—come afterwards—set you at liberty then, eh?" He then related the particulars of his interview with Sir Close Hawker, and by the time he had finished, the expected guest arrived, and our hero retreated to the drawing-room.

The three young ladies were there at his entrance, but little Emily was soon missed, having glided out of the room nobody knew how or when.

"Where can the little wretch be gone to?" exclaimed Charlotte, rising.

"Where are you going?" asked Alicia.

"I shall not be gone long, my dear," replied her black-eyed friend.

Nor did Alicia think it long, though two hours elapsed before her re-appearance.

Much of what passed during those two hours would seem very insipid to the reader, though doubtless there was a tolerable quantum of the pathetic in it, and the whole was extremely interesting and satisfactory to the two lovers, who, long before the expiration of the time, found themselves "*in statu quo ante bellum.*" All seemed as before the commencement of their invisible difficulties. Various little innocent liberties were taken by our hero, and not outrageously resented by the young lady, who, nevertheless, would have much enjoyed pulling his ears if she dared, but that privilege was postponed till the expiration of the nine times nine days. Their interview had commenced in a sombre yet pleasing style, and Alicia even shed a few tears; but ere it terminated, she caught herself sometimes in a merry vein, as Bernard related certain of his perplexing invisible mishaps while endeavouring to find her.

In such a mood she was when they were rejoined by Charlotte, who announced that the

two gentlemen were leaving the dining-room. Mr. Storer made his appearance almost immediately afterwards, and introduced his partner, Mr. Lapwell. Then came Mrs. Storer and Emily, followed by the tea equipage, and so they were, once more, all in the family way again.

“Lapwell and I been doing business,” said the merchant. “He takes possession soon as you women can pack up your traps—off for Maxdean then. Give you three days—that do, eh? Time to load a ship. Something be forgot, dare say—never mind, Mrs. Lapwell send ’em after you. Mind, no more bonnet-boxes than can help—carriage more like road-waggon than anything else last time.”

“I mean to take my chariot back to Audrey,” observed Bernard gallantly; “and as I shall have no luggage——”

“Eh? eh? capital that!” exclaimed Mr. Storer. “Find you a passenger. Just the thing!—very agreeable find him, dare say. Give you good lesson for young men—how to save money—know who I mean, eh?”

“ I think I can guess, sir,” replied Bernard, smiling. “ But as you think so highly of his society, perhaps you will accept of a seat likewise, as I very much prefer riding outside in pleasant weather.”

“ Very good, very good,” said the merchant; “ maybe may. Ally lend you her new maid — pretty girl — keep you company. See the old hunks to-morrow. Give you answer at dinner — dine here of course, eh? Glad to see you if can — but don’t put yourself out of your way. Old boy glad enough to go, dare say — save coach-hire.”

On the following morning Sir Close Hawker eagerly accepted the proposal, and gave himself up to strange dreams connected with the result of his expedition; but among them came none at all resembling the fate which was in store for him.

The next three days were spent by our lovers in the way in which lovers love to spend their time, that is to say, they were very much together. The only change worth observing was, that, as Mr. Storer said, Bernard “ began to

take kindly to his beef," and even Alicia seemed "to pick a bit more heartily."

When the morning of departure arrived, Mr. Storer and Sir Close occupied the interior of Bernard's chariot, while he mounted the box, having for his companion Miss Charlotte Read instead of Alicia's pretty maid, who, with certain other domestics, were despatched by the coach, as this was a general family move. The rest of our party occupied Mr. Storer's commodious vehicle, which, as he had prophesied, cut a very formidable appearance, owing to the indispensable bonnet boxes.

"Why don't you talk to me?" exclaimed Charlotte, immediately they were off the stones. "I know you will not have time for half you have to say about Alicia; so begin at once, like a good gentleman, and ease your mind!"

That they did forthwith talk of Alicia is a matter of course, and Bernard was astonished at the rapidity of their transit from London to Barnet, and thence to St. Alban's.

At the latter place began the troubles of his ancient inside passenger. So far they had pro-

ceeded with post horses ; but there those of Mr. Storer and our hero were waiting to convey them the rest of the journey. This arrangement had not been mentioned previously to Sir Close, and he therefore had calculated on being set down at the door of Maxdean Hall free of all cost. It was now evident that they must sleep upon the road ; and the idea of a night's expenses at an extravagant inn struck him with dismay. The merry merchant perceived the sudden alteration in his companion's spirits, and guessing the cause, resolved to give him what he called "a benefit." This resolution he communicated to Bernard, who informed the ladies, and the consequence was, that none of them declined champagne or burgundy at dinner, after their arrival at Woburn. Sir Close eyed the sparkling beverage as if it were molten gold running out of his own hoards, and, in spite of all his efforts to appear hilarious, could not now and then restrain a sigh.

"Peg too low," observed Mr. Storer—"Champagne with you. Bernard join us. Three glasses, Thomas—bottle out?—bring another."

“ I wonder if they have any good cape ?” said Sir Close. “ I should really prefer that. It is a wine which I always find ——”

“ Poison ! poison !” exclaimed the merchant. “ Dirt, and sugar, and water, cleared with white lead. Been analyzed, tell me. Hard day’s work — not used to travelling — must take care of yourself. Good wine best — cheapest in the end — save doctor’s bills. Get home to-morrow to dinner, hope — if not, know a good house on the road. Depend on whether we take a stage before breakfast.”

“ I am very partial to early rising in the country,” observed the miser ; “ indeed I think the morning by far the pleasantest part of the day.”

“ Depends on the womankind,” said Mr. Storer. Them and the weather — pretty uncertain both, eh ?”

The old man said something, which was intended to conciliate the ladies, and concerning the beneficial effects of morning air on the complexion ; but Bernard strenuously opposed moving before breakfast, as Alicia’s health was

still in a delicate state. So the question was purposely left unsettled, and Sir Close retired early, to calculate how much he *might* have saved by travelling outside the coach with a sandwich in his pocket.

Nothing worth mentioning occurred during the following day's journey, at the close of which our hero found himself happily sauntering with Alicia round the well-known walls of Maxdean Hall. They visited their favourite but fatal bower; and as they sat in it, the young lady observed,

“ I should think, Bernard, that you will be very cautious in future how you form foolish wishes here.”

“ I have but one,” replied he, “ and that is *not* a foolish wish.” She did not ask for any explanation; but he thought fit to give one by continuing, “ When I can call *you* mine, I shall have no wish ungratified.”

“ This is an ominous spot for wishing *anything*,” said Alicia; “ perhaps you might find as much cause for regret, if your present wish

were granted as on the last memorable occasion."

"Never, never!" exclaimed her lover. "But to be serious. I shall see my dear uncle tomorrow. There is now no obstacle. Let me gladden his heart by telling him that we have fixed the happy day."

"No — no — no," replied Alicia; "we must not talk of that yet."

Bernard continued, however, to press the subject, till at length she told him, that she dared not — could not think of it, until the nine times nine days were fully expired. And in this resolution she remained stedfast, in spite of his arguing that it appeared to indicate a want of confidence in him.

Bernard subsequently endeavoured to gain Mrs. Storer to his side, and then tried to persuade Charlotte and Emily to assist him, but they all agreed that the remaining term of his invisibility should be allowed to run out before anything decisive ought to be arranged. Mr. Storer himself was likewise of the same opinion,

and so nothing appeared to remain for our hero but to endure the tantalizing interval as well as he could ; and on the following morning, a little crest-fallen, he bent his way towards Audrey Hall.

Sir William received him in the most affectionate manner, and talked of his own little invisible disaster with the old woman as a most excellent joke : but his nephew perceived that his gaiety was forced and unnatural, and could not help fancying that something of more importance had occurred. He therefore lost no time in communicating the arrival of Sir Close Hawker at Maxdean, and the particulars of the conversation between him and Mr. Storer. Sir William listened attentively, and sometimes appeared as though pleased with the idea ; but, according to his old plan, declined giving any opinion till he should have had a night to consider the subject.

A much greater effect was produced upon him when his nephew spoke of Alicia's determination to wait the expiration of the nine times nine days. He shook his head, and was

evidently under the influence of a presentiment that he should scarcely hold out so long. Bernard's efforts to cheer him were of little avail during the earlier part of the day ; but towards evening he rallied surprisingly, and when retiring for the night, shook our hero warmly by the hand, and gaily observed, " Got a scheme in my head, as our friend Storer says. Won't tell you till to-morrow—but think it will do—the worthy merchant will, no doubt, come over in the morning, and I shall have some conversation with him, the result of which, unless I am greatly mistaken in my man, will not be very disagreeable to you. So—good night—and pleasant dreams to you."

In the morning Mr. Storer was seen driving his low four-wheeled chaise through the park, and the ancient victim of avarice and foolish wishes by his side.

The wretched old man bowed and grinned most obsequiously when introduced to Sir William, and continued to gaze upon him afterwards while conversing, as an adept may be supposed to watch the looks and motions of a

mighty magician. Bernard gladly perceived that his uncle appeared more amused than vexed at the *empressement* of his new guest; and the worthy merchant looked upon the speedy transfer of the unlucky gift as a settled point. In that, however, he was disappointed, as Sir William proposed a walk.

“You will excuse me, I trust,” said he to the miser, “for leaving your company so soon, as I have some very particular business with our mutual friend here. My nephew will, I am sure, feel great pleasure in showing you every attention.”

The miserable old man made a most profound obeisance, muttered something unintelligible, and submitted, with as good a grace as possible, to be left with Bernard, whom he forthwith began pestering with a variety of ridiculous questions, asking if he had studied the science of optics, and hinting a desire to see the Knight’s observatory and instruments.

“Well, there he is!” said Mr. Storer, as soon as he was alone with Sir William. “There’s a customer for your article. Nothing to do

but anoint him—wishes for it bad enough—answer for that—said so nine hundred and ninety-nine times, do believe, coming from town.”

“I feel greatly obliged to you, my dear sir,” replied Sir William; “but I think, under existing circumstances, I shall keep it, and let it die with me. It will not be long first, I feel. This fresh disappointment in my nephew’s affairs will put the finishing stroke to my worn-out frame. I cannot endure longer tantalization.”

“Eh! what?” exclaimed Mr. Storer, “something fresh? Nothing very bad, hope. Don’t know what shall do if it is. Gone too far now. Poor Ally! Tell—tell me, pray!”

“Do not be alarmed,” replied the Knight. “It is nothing new nor disagreeable *to you*; but *to me* it seems little else than a sentence to leave the world, just as I hoped to have witnessed the accomplishment of that which alone will enable me to leave it in peace. I feel that I shall not survive to see that day.”

“Phoo, phoo! All humbug!” said Mr. Storer. “Blue devils again! nothing more. Thought

had got rid of them and old witch together. Mean Ally's wedding-day, suppose. Soon come round, dare say. Seem to understand each other. One thing at a time though. Shake off the invisibles first. Come, let us go and anoint the old miser. Be better then. Clear prospect before you. Nothing but fit of blue devils."

Sir William persisted in affirming that he was in a very precarious state, or, as he expressed it, that his life hung by a thread, which would too probably snap before the expiration of Bernard's nine times nine days.

The merchant urged the transfer of the invisible gift, as the sure way of recovering health and mental tranquillity, the latter of which he was convinced could not previously be expected.

"I will make one last proposition," said Sir William, at length. "If you agree to it, all may yet end well with me, and I may die happy. If not, I must bow to my fate, and the poor old miser will escape safe back to London. If you will consent to an early day for the marriage, I will get rid of my troublesome gift directly the ceremony is over."

Mr. Storer argued that retaining the evil power till the marriage, was “like cutting off one’s nose to be revenged on one’s face;” but, finding he could make no impression, concluded by saying that it must rest entirely with the women, and that, if they consented, he should not offer any objection.

Sir Close Hawker was briefly informed that the philosopher would not consent to exhibit his wonderful optical delusion till the day of Alicia’s marriage, to which therefore he looked forward with almost as much eagerness as if he were to be the bridegroom.

CHAPTER XLI.

WHEN Mr. Storer introduced the proposition for Alicia's speedy marriage to his good lady, she did not fall into his way of thinking with her usual alacrity; and, subsequently, when the young people were consulted, many and long were the debates upon the question. The house was divided, and Charlotte appeared as the head of the opposition, which was so strong, that the merchant would probably have given way, but for the arrival of Bernard. This was a powerful reinforcement.

"You take Ally in hand," said he, "and I've thought of something to say to my old woman. Will do—think—clencher."

Our hero, of course, was extremely disinterested in all that he said to Alicia. It was for

his poor uncle's sake that he pleaded. He felt so much for him. Otherwise he would certainly have submitted, without a murmur, to wait the period of his expiring invisibility, tedious and tantalizing as the time might be. Perhaps he did not express himself very well, or she did not exactly like the idea of marrying, merely to oblige an hypochondriac old gentleman, for, after a long chat, during which he exhausted all his eloquence, she declared that she must act according to the advice of her mother and Charlotte, who both agreed that the nine times nine days ought to be terminated before the agitation of so important a question. Bernard's next step was an endeavour to take the outworks of the citadel, by bestowing his tediousness upon Charlotte, and he fancied, from her silence, and arch, good-humoured manner of listening to him, that he was making some progress, when he was interrupted by Mr. Storer, who came gaily up the walk where they were.

“No use talking to her,” he exclaimed.
“Good girl, Charlotte—little obstinate though,

Go along—there's a dear. My wife wants to talk to you. Got something to tell Bernard myself. Dine in half an hour, mind. So, chatter away fast as you can. Women do that—eh?"

As soon as the young lady was gone, he continued,

"Posed the old girl! Not a word to say. Told her if Ally wouldn't consent, Sir William would be miserable—you'd be frightened about him—demand gift back again—go on in the old way—bad as ever—worse maybe. Ally once married—no danger—never get gift again—if you would—old miser as soon part with his skin—eh?"

There was another view of the question, which the worthy merchant did not think fit to communicate to Bernard, but on which he laid great stress, when conversing with his good lady; and that was, the situation in which Alicia would be placed, in the event of Sir William's melancholy presentiments being realized. That they might be, he argued, was but too probable, considering the wonderful power

which hypochondriac affections had over the patient. And then, it was dreadful to think of what might be their daughter's share of self-reproach at a future day, and how much that, and Bernard's feeling that he had been treated with suspicion till the very last moment, might tend to destroy their future happiness.

These points were ably argued by Mrs. Storer, in the female conclave; and the result was, the recantation of Charlotte, who declared candidly, that, however strongly she would otherwise have urged delay, it did now appear to her that the risk of losing that mutual confidence and similarity of feeling, which could alone secure domestic happiness, was too imminent, and ought not to be incurred. Emily was sure that none of them would be happy till after the marriage. So Alicia, after being pressed by her mother and friends, and reminded how apt men were, after marriage, to scrutinize the manner in which they had been previously treated, knew not what to say, and, therefore, begged for a day or two to make up her mind. Three days were eventually grant-

ed, and she resolved to think the subject over coolly. But Bernard felt that it was his duty to assist her in the process of ratiocination, and by divers logical arguments, eloquent speeches, and pathetic representations, suiting the action to the word and the word to the action, after the much approved style of oratorical lovers, he induced her to consent that the ceremony should be performed in about a fortnight.

“Ay ay, Bernard,” said Mr. Storer, as they were sitting after dinner, “about a fortnight—way they ’ve got—Remember an old fellow—had been married five times—told me more difficulty in getting ’em to fix a day than all the rest of the business. Old woman and I settle that for you. Not badly managed though. Ally reckons well. Invisibility run out about same time as honeymoon—Thinks you won’t want to flit away from her while that lasts—can’t after, if you would—eh?”

The succeeding fortnight was a busy time with all the good people in and about the two halls. All were cheerful and upon the alert; but the most visible change was in Sir Wil-

liam, who rode over and dined several times at Maxdean, and seemed withal so gay and gallant, that Charlotte, who was a great favourite with him, declared that he had taken them all in, and she was sure there was nothing the matter with him.

Old Sir Close Hawker's head was filled day and night with stock-jobbing, schemes consequent upon his approaching invisibility; and the reverential deference with which he treated the present holder of that extraordinary power, was a source of amusement to all.

At length, the important day arrived. A sumptuous breakfast, of which very little was consumed, was prepared at Maxdean Hall. The bridegroom, of course, thought the bride more beautiful than any bride could ever possibly have been before. But, in reality, there was nothing particularly extraordinary attending the ceremony. The young ladies were dressed in white, and the gentlemen in various colours. The most wonderful thing was, that the old miser received a new coat from London expressly for the occasion, and was, withal, so

lively, that, upon Mr. Storer's observing it was somewhat too short, he sported an "old Joe," and said it would "be long enough" before he had another.

The bride was a little tremulous, probably more so than she would have been had the nine times nine days fully expired; but contrived to make her responses, and utter the promise to "love, honour and obey," with tolerable precision.

The subsequent arrangements for the day were a dinner at Maxdean Hall, after which the happy pair were to be permitted to depart on a projected tour, attended by the two bridesmaids, Charlotte and Emily. The morning was thus left for them to dissipate as they might, in and about the well-known grounds. But there yet remained important business to be transacted by the elders, in the interior of the mansion; and the first was the transfer of Sir William's troublesome gift to the person by whom it was so anxiously coveted. Never was a child more eager for a fresh toy than was Sir Close to witness and to be put in possession of

this new faculty. The excess of his agitation, when closeted for the purpose with Sir William and Mr. Storer, was such, that the latter became alarmed, and would not suffer the process to go on till he had compelled him to take a glass of madeira. At the moment he was swallowing it, Sir William pulled his ear and vanished. The miser put his glass upon the table, then looked at Mr. Storer and the empty chair with astonishment, and exclaimed,

“Where is our worthy friend gone?”

“He is in the room,” replied Mr. Storer, laughing.

“Impossible!” cried Sir Close, staring all round, and then looking under the table.

Sir William, in the gaiety of heart produced by the event of the morning, had forgotten the danger of playing any kind of invisible tricks, and stretching out his unseen hand, laid it upon that of the miser, who started, trembled, and turned deadly pale. Perceiving his error, the worthy Knight instantly made himself visible, and said,

“It is only me, do not be alarmed.”

Prepared as he was for something wonderful, the optical delusion, as he called it, was so complete, that the old man continued to tremble, and another glass of madeira was necessary before he could utter a word. Even when he did begin to speak, it was in confused cackling ejaculations, while his eyes were fixed in especial wonder and worshipful awe upon Sir William.

“Tell me, Sir!” he exclaimed. “Marvelous! I couldn’t have believed! Is it possible! There’s no denying. I was here—you were there. I felt. Yes; amazing! What depth of science! I see no glasses. It is beyond all conception! What a gift! Oh! oh that I were possessed of it!”

“And so,” observed Mr. Storer smiling, “you really wish that you had the power of making yourself invisible?”

“Indeed I do,” replied the miser. “And if Sir William will but instruct me! I know something of optics already. I have read nothing but books on that science ever since you first mentioned the subject to me; but I

am yet perfectly in the dark. I have no conception of any thing approaching to what I have witnessed. Oh ! what would I not give to possess such a power !”

“ If you positively do wish it,” continued Mr. Storer, “ I think perhaps our friend might be prevailed upon. But, the principal thing is to be assured that it really is your earnest desire. All depends upon that. If it be a mere fancy of the moment, you had better give up the idea.”

“ It is no whim of the moment !” replied Sir Close, warmly. “ I wish it from the bottom of my soul. I have wished it a thousand times. I have done little else than wish for it ever since you told me in London.”

Sir William remained silent till the wish had been distinctly and vehemently repeated nine times, and then, to the great admiration of the ancient novice, he produced two small boxes of ointment, and proceeded to explain the nature of the ceremony which it would be necessary for him to perform. Sir Close Hawker stared, and though his creed was professedly that of an

unbeliever in all supernatural agency, experienced certain unpleasant misgivings. Indeed, a steady mental consistency in unbelief is a point of obduracy to which very few modern philosophers attain. Many a vaunting atheist, after his fits of jactitation, feels the cold hand of doubt intrusively meddling with the secret things of his inward spirit. It is hard work to become a firm unbeliever; and, as in making the attempt, we must lose what the wisest and best of men in all ages have set a high value on, without the possibility of gaining any thing, we take the liberty of strongly recommending our readers not to be lured into playing so dangerous a game.

Our covetous old wisher eyed the boxes and Sir William, and almost expected the appearance of some agent of a very different character. Such, however, were his golden dreams and love of money, that it may be doubted whether he would not have endeavoured to make terms with the foul fiend himself, rather than abandon the prospects offered to him by the possession of his wish.

“Do what you like with me,” said he, at length; “is there nothing more to be done? nothing to sign, I hope?”

“No; I have told you all,” replied Sir William. “I must anoint your ears—nothing more,” and he forthwith proceeded to perform the ceremony previously described.

No sooner was it completed, than the wretched old man began to make trial of his power, and was delighted beyond measure to find that he had indeed got the invaluable secret, which he vainly imagined was to be to him even as the philosopher’s stone.

While this transaction was going on within doors, our hero and his bride were sitting in the well-known arbour.

“I was just going to wish something,” said Alicia, “but I won’t. This is an unlucky place for wishing.”

“Not—not now,” observed Bernard; “every thing goes on well now, as the yeoman said it would. And I cannot forget that he made his appearance here directly after I uttered my last wish. So, tell me, my dearest girl, what is

yours? I am sure it is nothing you need be ashamed of."

"No," replied Alicia, "perhaps not. But it cannot be granted, and so it was very foolish to think anything about it. However, as I will not hide even my thoughts from you now, I will tell you. I was just wishing that I could pull your ears well, without—but—what is that noise?"

"Tally ho! Tally ho! Yoicks! Tally ho!" shouted some one in front of the hall, while his long-lashed whip kept cracking away like pistol-shots.

"That is John Bull!" exclaimed Bernard. "I will go and welcome him, and must introduce him to you. I must stop him too—for, if he gets into the house, he will interrupt what is going forward, by preventing the old hunks from repeating his wishes."

In this intention, it appeared to him, that he was too late, as, when he got to the front-door, Mr. Storer and Sir William were already there shaking hands with the yeoman.

"I heard of the wedding," said the latter,

“and came to wish you joy. All will go on well now, depend upon it.”

Bernard, after receiving his congratulations, invited him to take a walk in the grounds, where he promised to introduce him to his bride, and, at the same time, hinted that his uncle and father-in-law had some important business to arrange.

“All settled,” said Mr. Storer; “old fellow pulling his ears like a bell-hanger. Nothing to do now.—Plenty of beef to-day.—Pick a bit, farmer—eh?”

Our hero congratulated his uncle, while Mr. Storer told the yeoman of what had just occurred in the parlour.

“Glorious! glorious!” cried John Bull, “and on the marriage-day, too! Hang me if that doesn’t beat even fox-hunting! Where’s the bride? Tally ho! I must see her! I’ve got something to tell her, that will make her little heart pretty near jump out of her skin. You said she was walking, didn’t you? I’ll find her! Tally ho! Yoicks!” and, smacking his

whip, away he went towards the harbour, followed by Bernard.

The bride received the compliments of her boisterous visitor with blushing confusion.

“I wouldn’t have missed coming here at the nick of time,” said he, “not for the best day’s sport that ever was seen in Leicestershire. I dare say you would have found it out before long, without me; but there’s nothing like a fair start. In the old harbour, too! Capital that!”

Joy and good-humour were so strongly visible in the yeoman’s features, that the bride and bridegroom were both delighted without knowing the cause of his hilarity. Their delight was changed to amazement, when he continued addressing Alicia.

“Now, Ma’am, you’ve got a husband. Don’t be afraid of him. And, by way of letting him see that you are not, take him by the ears, and shake him well.”

“No, no,” murmured Alicia, looking serious, “you must excuse me; that is a subject with which I cannot trifle.”

“ My dear young lady,” continued the yeoman, “ let me beg of you to do as I tell you. You will not repent of it.”

“ Do, Alicia !” said Bernard, leaning towards her.

“ I dare not !” she replied, shrinking back.

“ Pull them yourself, then, sir,” cried John Bull.

“ No,” said Bernard ; “ I have made a vow, and will keep it to the last.”

“ Well,” observed the yeoman, “ it would serve you both right, for your want of confidence, if I were to keep what I know to myself. But I won’t, for this *shall* be a merry day. And so, listen. I didn’t think it worth mentioning before, because I didn’t suppose that Sir William could have found any one so soon ; but, as he has, the *transfer* releases *you* from all share in the business, and you may pull your ears, or let them be pulled, as safely as I may.”

“ Is it possible !” exclaimed the bride.

“ Ay, ay !” continued the yeoman, “ I see how your eyes sparkle ! I knew how glad you’d

be. So, just give him a gentle twitch, and, if he vanishes, I'll eat him."

"Shall I?" said Alicia, timidly.

"Yes," replied Bernard; "I am sure we may rely upon his word."

The bride forthwith laid her left hand upon his shoulder, and gently raised her right, till she held the tip of his sinister ear between her finger and thumb. Then, after a moment of nervous hesitation, she gave the momentous pull, and her delight can be imagined only by those ladies, who, like her, have believed their lovers to possess but one dangerous quality, and, after marriage, discovered that even that one was merely ideal.

"There he sits, Ma'am!" exclaimed the yeoman, "as large as life. No more flitting out of your sight. All plain and above board, as it ought to be, between man and wife. Here comes your father, too! Just in time, sir," he continued, addressing Mr. Storer, who now advanced with Sir William. "Capital news for you! Look there! Ay, ay, pull away, young lady! Bless your sweet face! if I'm

not as happy about it as yourself, may I never have another day's good sport !”

The nature of the case was soon explained to the elders, and then the delighted party proceeded towards the house, headed by the yeoman, whose boisterous spirits appeared to have risen beyond all bounds.

“ Ordered out a cold round of beef and so on for you, John,” said Mr. Storer, “ just by way of lunch. Won't find the ale bad, neither.”

“ Ay, ay !” cried John Bull. “ I'll just have a look at them, otherwise perhaps I may set the ladies staring at dinner. Hang me if I know what to do with myself, I feel so happy, and as light as a cork. I do think I've gone back half a dozen years to-day already. But it has always been so, whenever I've been able to do anybody good, since I left off the sneaking ways belonging to invisibility. It seems to me as if I could go fox-hunting on foot. Tally ho ! You wouldn't be likely to take me for sixty now !” he continued, turning to Bernard ; and then he jumped over several of the borders

and shrubs, like a boy let loose from school. In the midst of his inordinate glee, as they approached the house, he flourished his ponderous long-lashed whip, and was in the act of cracking it furiously, when it suddenly twisted itself about in an unaccountable manner.

“Hallo ! how now !” he exclaimed, and finding a resistance, he jerked it towards him violently, and forthwith there was heard a noise of something falling and being dragged along upon the gravel, and then a groan and a faint cry, all of which were explained by the instantaneous appearance of poor Sir Close Hawker, stretched upon the ground, with the formidable lash twisted round his meagre legs.

It seemed that the old fellow had resolved upon having an invisible walk, in order to convince himself of the efficacy of his charm upon all eyes. After looking upon the group as they advanced, and observing with delight that he was unseen, he had just turned round, and was about to precede them into the house, when the heavy lash became painfully entwined round his invisible white silk stockings, and the

subsequent tug of the sturdy yeoman's arm, threw him upon his face, and dragged him, in that posture, to the serious damage of his new coat, ere he was able to make himself apparent. Condolence followed of course ; but there were certain of the party who found it difficult to preserve becoming gravity, and among that number was the bride, who, therefore, made her escape, in order to communicate to her mother and friends the joyful intelligence of Bernard's emancipation.

The only signs of the miser's first invisible disaster, which were apparent at dinner, were the disappearance of the rent wedding garment, a patch of sticking-plaister on the tip of his nose, another on his left cheek, and a slight disarrangement in the symmetry of his lean legs, caused by similar applications.

Now the merits of a good dinner have been so often said and sung, in all ages, both in poetry and prose, that there can be no doubt of its being a very excellent thing, and a very laudable mode of evincing respect and friendship ; but, when a man has just married a

dainty young lady, his dinner, at least for that day, is not an affair of the first importance. So Bernard was right glad when it was over, and cut it as short as possible—and we follow his example.

There was a little nervousness at leave-taking, both among old and young; but the happy pair and the bridesmaids were, at length, seated in the carriage—the door was banged to—Alicia looked out and smiled through her tears, one of which rolled down her cheek—and then, the wheels began rolling, and away they went, at a prodigious rate, and were very soon out of sight.

The four gentlemen remaining, returned to table to drink, once more, to the young couple. Seldom were four men more content with the occurrences of the day, and seldom have four persons of such different manners, characters, and habits, sate down with such perfect cordiality. Sir William shook off all stiffness. Mr. Storer was determined to keep up his spirits, though, now and then, after uttering what he meant for a joke, he looked as if he

had said something pathetic, for his mind *would* wander after Ally. Old Sir Close Hawker often broke out into a cackling laugh; but took his burgundy very kindly, and forbore to ask for cape. The yeoman was all in his glory, and, after the health and happiness of the bride and bridegroom had been drunk in the usual way, proposed that it should be sung, by way of variety.

“So,” said he, “I’ll begin, and here goes!” and, filling a bumper, he struck off,

“Here’s a health to the bride and the groom!

May love, joy, and peace be their lot!

Be their happiness such to leave wishes no room,

And invisible troubles forgot.

Tol de rol de rol, lill li dee, &c.”

“There, sir, that’s my own making,” he continued, addressing Mr. Storer. “Now it’s your turn.”

“Humph!” was the reply; “never rhymed in my life. Don’t like to give up, though, such a day as this. Let me see—hem—pair—care—humph—” and after mumbling awhile to himself, the good-natured merchant, resolved

not to check the whim of his eccentric guest,
began,

“ Here’s a health to the happy young pair !
They’ve no wishes but what are complete.
May they never know trouble—”

Humph ! pretty near broke down—told you I
couldn’t—remember now though—

“ May they never know trouble, nor sorrow, nor care,
But live happy, and I live to see ’t.
Fol de rol, &c.”

“ Bravo !” cried the yeoman, “ we are the
lads ! Now Sir William.”

“ Really,” said the Knight, “ I am much in
the same predicament as my worthy friend. I
never was a votary of the Muses, even in my
youth—but I’ll try what I can do,” and filling
a bumper, he sang,

“ Here’s a health to the bridegroom and bride !
May they flourish in Audrey’s old Hall !
Through the morning and evening of life, side by side,
Till like leaves in the autumn they fall.
Fol de rol, &c.”

“ Better and better !” shouted John Bull.
“ Now old Moneybags !”

The ancient and last of the invisible gentlemen appeared, for a moment, inclined to take this epithet in dudgeon; but when he saw all laughing around him, he thought it better to go with the stream, and in a most inharmonious, creaking, croaking style, began carolling,

“ I drink both their healths, and am glad
To think that I ’ve served my good friends,
By taking a gift which has made ’em both sad,
But, I doubt not, will answer my ends.

Fol de rol, &c.”

The reader, who may think all this very foolish, is requested to recollect that, to be very merry and very wise, at the same time, is not a very common gift among us poor mortals.

On the following morning Sir Close took leave of his worthy host, who sent him in the low four-wheeled chaise as far as the neighbouring town, through which the London coach passed. It was a delightful morning, and the old fellow thought he might as well save something by riding outside; so, having dismissed Mr. Storer’s servant, he employed himself in calcu-

lating anticipations relative to his invisible gift, and unluckily took it into his head to make use of it on the present occasion, as he observed that there were no outside passengers on the back part of the coach. He therefore put a direction upon his small portmanteau, which he ordered to be forwarded to town, and observed, that he had changed his mind, and should not go himself till the following day, as he wished to see a gentleman in the neighbourhood. He then walked down the inn yard, found a corner where he could make himself invisible, and returned and took possession of the back seat of the coach, just before it started.

Great was his delight as the mile-stones were rapidly left behind ; and he amused himself by counting them, and calculating that, at every third, he had saved a shilling. This process went on, uninterruptedly, till the gain was no less than ten shillings, besides sixpence which he supposed he must have given to the coachman, under other circumstances.

He had now arrived at a small inn, where the

visible passengers were to dine, and, as the change of air had given him an appetite, he contrived to satisfy it without being subjected to the unpleasant ceremony of payment. As there was no bustling of waiters, this important affair was managed with the greatest facility, and he remounted the vehicle in higher spirits, and still better pleased with his invisible gift.

“Another shilling since dinner !” said he, as the third mile-stone appeared, “that’s eleven and sixpence ; and I suppose they would have charged eighteen-pence for dinner, that’s thirteen shillings,” and he was going on with his calculations, when the coach stopped at a cross road, where no less than four persons were waiting to be conveyed to town. Sir Close had anticipated something of this sort, and therefore immediately retreated to the roof, where he seated himself upon the luggage, and adroitly shifted the position of his legs as the portmanteaus of his fellow-travellers were thrown up.

In this new elevated situation he had already counted five more shillings, when the

weather became overcast, and the chillness of the air somewhat affected him. A remedy, however, was at hand, and, without scruple, he wrapped himself in a large box-coat, which, of course, became invisible. Presently some drops of rain fell, upon which he seized the best umbrella he could find, and it likewise vanished in his hands. As the rain soon increased, both these articles were missed by their owners, and their lamentations added not a little to the glee of the miserable, selfish old man, as he sate snugly warm and protected, and saw them exposed to the peltings of the storm.

“The coat cost me almost ten pounds,” said its owner, “and I have not worn it more than half-a-dozen times.”

“Mine was a silk umbrella,” observed his companion. “I gave thirty shillings for it only the other day.”

“Humph!” thought Sir Close, “that’s eleven pounds ten. Suppose we say they’re worth half the money. Five pounds fifteen. Then if I should keep them, that and the eighteen shillings will make six pounds thirteen. Really I——”

Now, whether he did mean to appropriate these articles to himself must be left for the charity of the reader to decide, for at this period of his soliloquy it was cut short by an accident. In order to shelter himself more completely from the wind and rain, he had turned his back to the horses, and sate on the leeward side of the coach, from whence he felt himself swept away in an instant, and was thrown upon the ground, with a violence that literally knocked the breath out of his body, and probably would have killed him on the spot, but for the huge box-coat which he had either borrowed or purloined.

When he recovered the use of his faculties, the cause of his fall was sufficiently apparent. The coachman, in order to avoid something that was passing at the moment, had driven to the side of the road, under the branch of a tree, and of course without making any calculation for the invisible elevation above the luggage.

Sir Close made himself apparent, and felt at first disposed to believe that he was not much hurt; but when he attempted to get up and walk, he found himself utterly unable.

Some countrymen who passed shortly afterwards, carried him on a hurdle to a neighbouring public-house. A surgeon was sent for, and pronounced that one of his legs was fractured, and that he had received considerable internal injury from the violence of his fall. The results were, a confinement of three months in the country, and a lameness which effectually prevented him ever after from making that use of his invisible gift which he had anticipated.

A few years terminated his career, and, as far as we can learn, the mysterious secret of anointing perished with him.

Turning from this contemptible and miserable old fellow, we have great pleasure in saying that Sir William Audrey recovered his health and spirits, to the surprise and delight of all who knew him. When the family title was recovered, he gave up the old hall and estate to Sir Bernard and his lady, whose children he lived to see and dandle on his knee, and gambol with, quite in the style of a grandpapa. Mr. and Mrs. Storer likewise lived to a good old age, and when they departed this life, the

eldest son of our hero and heroine occupied Maxdean Hall, having married the eldest daughter of Sir Charles and Lady Bracewell, the latter better known to the reader under her maiden name of Miss Charlotte Read. Little Emily had likewise, in due course, given herself away to a small and reverend gentleman, who esteemed her as a very precious little gift indeed, and was as kind and good towards her as she deserved. More so he could not have been. The Reverend Mr. and Mrs. Placid were consequently perfectly happy and contented in a small vicarage, for several years, and then they removed to Audrey Rectory, vacated by the demise of the Rev. P. P. Kenemall.

John Bull is yet living, and the father of a numerous offspring. His spirits are not quite so boisterously exuberant as they were wont to be in former days, and sometimes he grumbles about the state of the times. But still he feels that he has much to be thankful for, and remains perfectly convinced that, if he had not got rid of his gift and returned to an "upright and downright" course of life, he should long

ere this have faded away into a state of permanent and irretrievable invisibility.

Happy is the man whose foolish wishes, whether gratified or disappointed, leave not behind consequences more bitter than those which befell Bernard Audrey.

THE END.

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